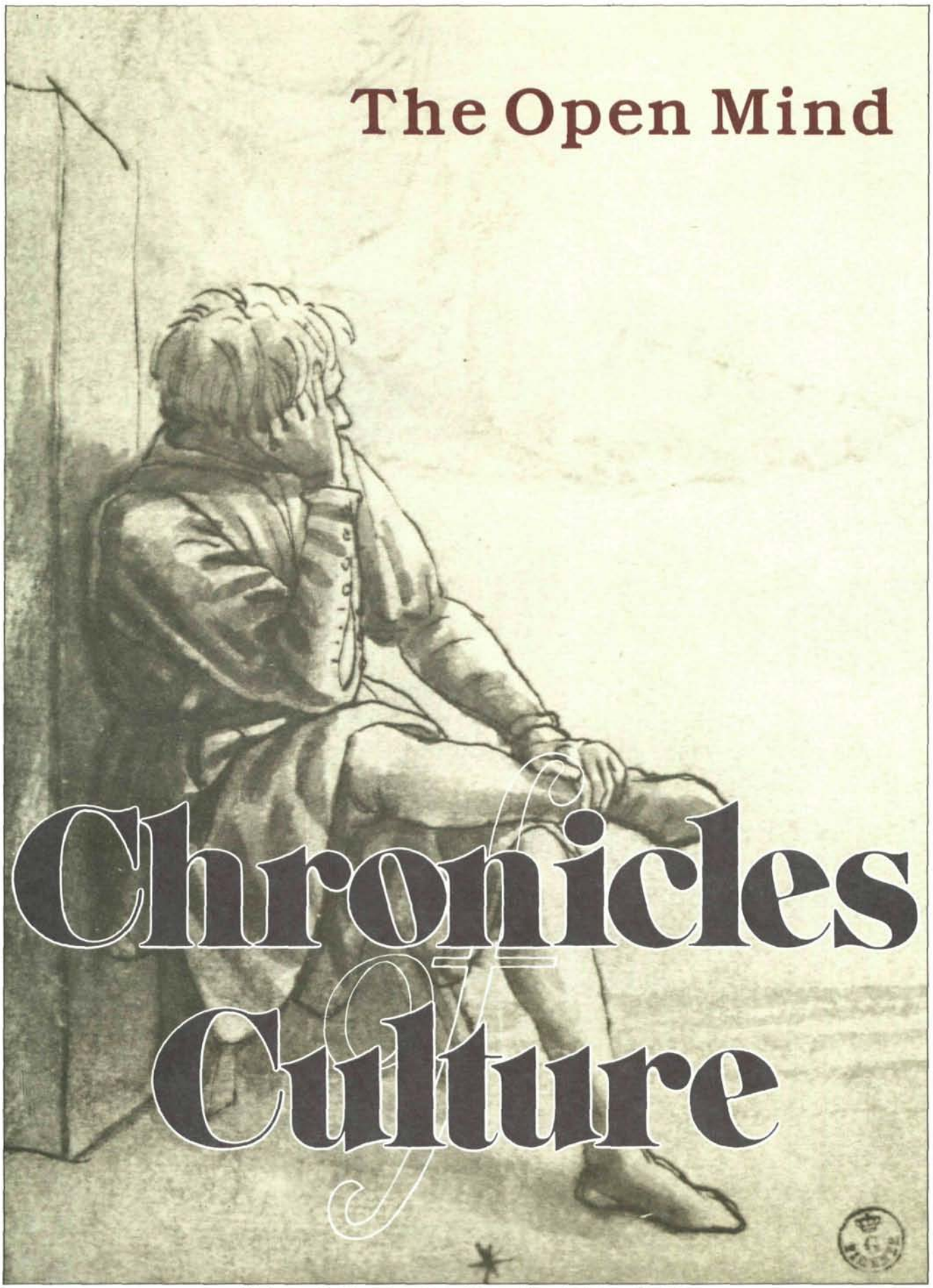
The Open Mind



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COMMENT

That one's mind is closed just at the point where he thinks it is most open is a lesson that can be learned from baseball as well as from epistemology. This verity seems to include higher education, for the archetype of this fact is the liberal professor who, while formally avowing standards of fair play and freedom of speech, cannot abide the open expression of opinions he disagrees with. Many conservative writers have dealt with the phenomenon of the illiberal liberal academician, but I believe I can document this phenomenon (as can most who have pursued a college degree) with a personal example.

I once took a course in the history of ancient philosophy with a professor who had a mild, round face and wore glasses, and whose manner was both humorous and studious. He gave off the idea that, although a Catholic and teaching at a Catholic university, he was a man of independent mind who had contrary opinions about certain Church doctrines, including Papal Infallibility. He also had the habit of frequently asking questions of his class, which was a great technique to use in a course which studied Plato, Socrates, and the pre-Socratics, all of whom were fond of confounding opponents by means of trick questions, conundrums and logical absurdities. Now, as it happened, the professor realized early in the course that when I was asked such questions as Zeno asked his audience, I would answer straightforwardly, offering no qualification or escape route for myself. At which point the professor, by means of a second question, would reveal the contradiction that the ancient philosopher had discovered lay beneath my easy rationalization of the nature of time or being. As a result, the professor called on me more than the others, and when, after a time, I realized this, I decided to go along with it and not change my straightforward and literally unsophisticated way of answering. After all, I reasoned, the professor was not doing it out of malice, but only for expository motives, as it were.

Once, however, I won such a contest with the professor. It happened just before class while he and I were standing outside the classroom, only this time the subject was politics. In particular, the argument, as far as I can remember it, concerned whether the United Nations would enact a certain proposal detrimental to the United States. The professor took the standard liberal position, I took the conservative position, and he attacked by means of his usual pointed question. I responded by means of a distinction between actions which the General Assembly could take and those which the Security Council could take. Surprisingly, that was the end of the argument, for the professor made no reply, and the discussion broke off and class began.

Reflecting on this later, I perceived how odd it was. The professor had no reason to believe that I was particularly bright, having often caught me off guard in class, and he no doubt assumed that he could prevail in a political debate even when he did not know much about the subject. He lived and worked,

I realized, in an academic environment in which liberal opinion was taken for granted, functioning as a token of acceptability into academic company. Naturally, such opinion went unchallenged and untested, making it difficult to defend whenever, unexpectedly, it was challenged. For this reason, aggressive conservatives have often earned a reputation for rhetorical brilliance they have not altogether merited. Liberalism has a peculiar blind spot, for it believes in its own rationality, i.e., that liberal opinions are the end result of open discussion and frank reason, and therefore that any disagreement can only be the result of irrationality or motivated by vile purposes. Why else disagree with an opinion both reasonable and high-minded? Ironically, just because liberalism professes to be rational, it closes off the possibility of further debate; professing to be the product of an open mind, it produces closed ones instead.

To have an open mind means not so much the commonly perceived notion of it, which I might almost term the vulgar notion, that is, believing the other fellow has a right to his opinion, and that we ought to make an effort to hear him out. This might merely mean an empty courtesy on our part, giving the fellow a chance to speak, but without ever intending to have his opinion influence ours. To have an open mind means, I think, being ready in one's own person to follow the truth wherever it may lead, and to hear the voices not of other people so much, but of reality. To have a closed mind, then, means to close off those various witnesses and testimonies we might like to ignore, which witnesses need not always be other people, but other forms of evidence, other accesses to reality.

Our society has largely closed its mind today on what are called the "social issues," taking a view of them that is severely

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blinkered. This takes the form of ignoring evidence, some of it obvious and hard to ignore, some of it subtle and easy to miss. For a long time, officials ignored the rising rate of violent crime —the increase in murder, robbery, rape, muggings, and assaults not registering on the Richter scale of liberal sensitivity. The reason they ignored the crime rate was simple: the rise in crime statistics contradicted various liberal presuppositions about the nature of man and the efficacy of social-welfare programs. They assumed that men were inherently rational and good, and driven to crime only out of the direst economic necessity; to recognize the rising crime rate was to recognize their own misjudgment about the causes of criminal activity which, in turn, would force a re-examination of rehabilitative penology. Their ideology, in fact, had a cognitive effect, for they literally could not see what was common knowledge to the citizenry at large.

To have an open mind means, finally, to be able to perceive cause-and-effect relationships when we approach certain complex social and political issues. Certainly, it would scandalize the liberal judge to be told that his permissiveness on the bench caused some degree of criminal activity. This is because his critics perceive that crime is encouraged when criminals realize they can get away with it, whereas the judge cannot. That the prevailing winds of permissivism have as much as or more to do with the rising crime rate than poverty is not something our liberal judge can see. He is locked into another way, another mind-set, of seeing crime and its cause, as is the newspaper editor who exculpates the defendant, and the professor who wrote the book from which the judge and editor learned their sociology. But what the judges could not see, their clerks saw; what the editors were blinded to, the janitors saw; and what the professors ignored, the housewives became expert in.

Having expostulated on the closed-mindedness of liberalism and the arrogance it produced, the biblical injunction about examining the beam in our own eye rather than the mote in our brother's comes to mind. Conservatives are often said to have closed minds, but, as in the case of academic liberals, I think this is because we often fail to meet and argue with people we disagree with. I also think that power yields arrogance not only in the way that Senator Fulbright thought, but epistemologically as well. For one who has obtained political power, it must be an awful temptation to think that it is because his point of view enabled him to see The Truth, and that all those other folks must be wrong. Power, therefore, can bring about a closed mind, and that is something for conservatives to watch for now that they are enjoying more of it than they used to.

—John Caiazza

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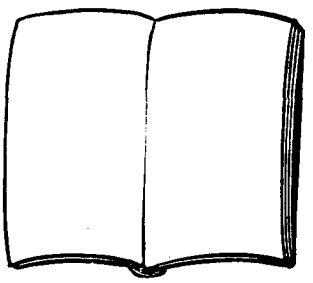
Nobel Prize 1982



This year it went to Gabriel Garcia Márquez, the Colombian novelist who authored *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970), an outstanding literary work. It is a unique novel in which the reality of myths, the profound sense of folkloric tradition, and flashes of warm-hearted wisdom are blended into an idiosyncratic achievement. But while Mr. Garcia Márquez has actually produced *one* superb book, the rest of his output proved either dismissible, or inconspicuous, or repetitious. Tomasi de Lampedusa, author of *one* novel, *The Leopard,* which has been universally acclaimed as perhaps the most trenchant judgment on the European civilization in modern belles lettres, did not earn the prize.

But—Mr. Garcia Márquez, like his predecessor from the same region, Pablo Neruda, is a celebrated Latin American communist, and although this circumstance certainly does not guarantee the Western world's highest literary award, no doubt it helps. It helps exlpain, for instance, why Jorge Luis Borges—the first Latin American to put his part of the globe on the contemporary intellectual map, the subtle interpreter of the depths and tensions of the modern mind in terms of South America's identity, the translator of philosophies into the language of literature—has never been honored by the Nobel Prize. He is anti-Marxist and has never hesitated to admit it. Apparently, to the Latin American cultural establishment whose approval is necessary for the Prize, that is enough to disqualify even a genius. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Idealism

The Nation, a journal as Marxist at the bottom of its heart as any, is beginning to demonstrate dangerous lapses into bourgeois idealism. In an article on herpes, one of *The Nation's* sexual revolutionaries chides the press for alerting the society to the perils of the disease. We read there:

> Cancer is a disease that the state can inflict on the citizenry, while herpes seems more a disease of choice, that is, a democratic affliction.

Fie on you, *Nation!* Is this the extent of what you know, at your age, about how things really are between ladies and gents? Have none of the editors from your offices ever been to a singles' bar? Choice? What idealistic coyness, or idiocy—if it's really meant to be straight and sincere. It's certainly an idea, however, that qualifies you for the *Playboy,* or *Penthouse,* Award for Practical Democracy in the category of Highest Prize for People's Afflictions. □

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The Prevaricative Left & Homemade Fascism

Joseph Conlin: *The Troubles: A Jaundiced Glance Back at the Movement of the 60's;* Franklin Watts; New York.

Alan Brinkley: *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Bryce Christensen

Once upon a time, before such low-tech soporifics became passé, mothers used to beguile young offspring with a fable about a credulous emperor tricked by a clever tailor into buying a nonexistent suit of clothing which was to appear beautiful to the wise but invisible to the foolish. Not wanting to appear foolish, the emperor donned the imaginary suit and paraded nude through the streets to the approving "oohs" and "aahs" of subjects who likewise did not want to appear foolish. All of the fun was, of course, spoiled when a vocal young boy innocently revealed the obvious: the emperor didn't have any beautiful clothes. Some 20 years ago, a new left consisting of thousands of self-appointed emperors began parading through America's streets and campuses, declaring that the wise among us would see that they represented a beautiful new philosophy which would banish discord, injustice, and poverty. For a decade the liberal intelligentsia and media loudly oohed and aahed while the 60's radicals continued to parade. The parading died down during the 70's, but many liberals continued the oohing and aahing, nostalgically longing for a return to the "sensitive idealism" which they saw in the 60's activism. The fun may finally be over, though, for Joseph Conlin, himself a radical leftist, has finally declared the obvious: the 60's radicals had no beautiful philosophy.

Mr. Christensen is an editorial intern at the Chronicles.

But while Conlin's *Troubles* will doubtless serve the worthwhile purpose of revealing to liberal readers that their darling 60's radicals were aimless frauds, nonliberal readers will doubtless find most of his revelations boringly obvious. Mr. Conlin need not tell a conservative that the 60's Free Speech Movement rapidly degenerated into a Foul Speech Movement because its participants really did not care about free speech, nor need he point out that the students who seized four buildings at Columbia quickly lost interest in all of their "social justice" demands because they really did not care about social justice. Most of Conlin's other revelations are equally underwhelming: the 60's movement fawned over the blacks because of a condescending racism; the flower children were actually turned on to drugs, not love; the Black Panthers were merely loudmouthed, cowardly thugs, not heroic visionaries; the "progressive" pragmatism of American pedagogy encouraged aimless iconoclasm among 60's youth; the 60's "counterculture" offered little but nightmarish caricatures of the worst features of the existing culture; 60's radicals attacked the university because it was easier and more spectacular than actually working to help the poor. Yes, Mr. Conlin, and the Pope is Catholic.

Still, coming from a leftist, such candor is refreshing. Of course, any radical leftist who persists in such honesty will soon cease to be a radical leftist, since most leftist doctrines are far too frail to be exposed to the cruel light of day. Conlin evidently will be a leftist for some time, for despite his frankness about the 60's movement, he has mastered the mendacious arts of the left. He has especially mastered the art of appearing to be "objective" while shamelessly defending a lie. Thus, for example, Conlin admits that if Mr. and Mrs. Neatnik of the Eisenhower 50's were "examined with the same open-minded tolerance with which anthropologists examine Italian mountain villages," it would be "difficult to sneer and snort," yet on the facing page he largely endorses the leftists' biased belief that the Neatniks' world of Little League and PTA was "vapid, trivial, and empty." (Real "substance," Conlin tells us elsewhere, was found in "the old Marxist study groups," not in PTA meetings.) Similarly, like an objective scholar Conlin sets out to establish the validity of the liberal dogma that "the list of social radicals imprisoned and even executed in the United States for trumped-up crimes is a long one" by actually showing the top of the list—Joe Hill, Sacco and Vanzetti, and the Haymarket anarchists. Without revealing any more of this allegedly long list, Conlin repeats the dogma he has so "objectively" substantiated: "The chronicle of framed American radicals is a long one." (Joe McCarthy, you will recall, once tried this phony "long list" technique.) With similar "objectivity" Conlin concedes that traditional Leninist theory will not support the "capitalist aggression" explanation of the Vietnam War since America had virtually no investments in Indochina before the war. But instead of sensibly rejecting the leftists' "capitalist aggression" explanation of the war, he invokes the absurd notion of William A. Williams that American capitalism fought in Vietnam "to maintain its potential to expand." (Conlin praises this explanation for its "subtlety," but sophistry by any other name will smell as rank.)

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In a book otherwise filled with the lies of the left, why then is Conlin so ruthlessly honest in debunking the myth of the "beautiful 60's"? It seems suspicious. And it is. Conlin's real intent is not to expose the lies of the left, but to *sanitize* them. Quite simply, Conlin is repelled by the people who made up the 60's movement. This is easy enough to understand. After all, these were people who urinated in public fountains, fried their brains with LSD, shouted obscenities on PA systems, and exploded bombs on college campuses. What bothers Conlin more than any of these failings, though, is that these nasty people had the gall to call themselves radical leftists and thus to make the American public distrustful of the real radical left. O foul betrayal! Conlin is sure that the beautiful ideas of the radical left are far more beautiful than the "beautiful people" of the 60's movement, so he peremptorily cuts them off. The radicals of the 60's new left, he argues implausibly, were not really "very left," not really radical, not really even political. The first contortion this face-saving excommunication requires is a sweeping repudiation of the numerous leftist intellectuals who repeatedly and persistently encouraged and identified themselves with the 60's subculture. These people, the same ones who had for years attacked bourgeois capitalism and championed Marxist socialism, were simply wrong to see any reflection of their ideas in the "counterculture." (Then how, Mr. Conlin, can we be sure that they were not dead wrong about capitalism and socialism also?) The second contortion the excommunication of the 60's movement requires is a drastic redefinition of the terms *radical, leftist,* and *political.* In Conlin's lexicon, all three are redefined simply in terms of their relationship to socialist dogma, narrowly conceived. Since few of the 60's activists were disciplined socialists of the same sort which Conlin has now become (he dropped out of the movement in '68), they were not therefore bona fide radicals or leftists. These repulsive people, he explains, were simply *cultural* rebels whose rebellion had no real political or even much historical significance. No, on second thought, to get even further from the realm of political "relevance," he identifies them as a "religious" movement. (For a socialist, what could be more irrelevant?) Conlin even performs the invaluable service of finding a historical analogue for us: the 60's movement was like that of the Manichees of the decade 490-500 A.D. (Never mind, Conlin tells the reader, that the Manichees sought to purge themselves of the evil which resides in fleshly passions and the 60's activists sought to purge their minds of the restraints upon such passions; if you stand on your head and squint just right, the two movements look remarkably similar.)

This is a transparently disingenuous strategy, permitting Conlin simultaneously to indict the 60's movement for leaving behind the bourgeois ethic of decency, responsibility, and commitment *and* to indict it for failing to leave behind what Conlin identifies as the distinctively bourgeois failings, including that most reprehensible of all failings, the inability to reject capitalism in favor of socialism. (Expediently, Conlin fails to note that the failings he identifies as bourgeois are shared by every other class and that in their excoriation of bourgeois culture radical leftists like himself almost never mention that the bourgeois *have* any virtues.) Predictably, Conlin condemns the new left much more vigorously for not leaving behind bourgeois capitalism, because this is a "political" decision, than he does for leaving behind bourgeois ethics, because this is merely a "cultural" decision.

Indeed, Conlin believes the modish preference for sexual adventurism rather than marital fidelity, for coke parties rather than family barbeques, is "not very important" because it fails to transcend "the root assumptions on which American order is based." (This from a man who solemnly declares that the preference for coal rather than nuclear power is a political "issue of substance"!) Sensible thinkers have always realized that culture—religious, ethical, and even recreational—is inextricably interwoven with politics. The decline of culture always has immediate political consequences. Widespread cries for tax-supported day-care centers, for example, are only heard in a polity which is losing its grip on the bourgeois sense of familial obligation. Similarly, demands for publicly funded birth control are heard only in countries where the bourgeois standard of morality is on its way out. Unlike Conlin, the framers of the Declaration of Independence understood this. That's why they leaned this document not only against their own lives and fortunes, but also against bourgeois honor and "reliance in divine Providence." Conlin can understand the political significance of human lives and fortunes; he evidently has no conception of the political significance of faith or honor. Perhaps that's why he does not include the revolution announced in the Declaration in his list of "great revolutions"—the French, the Chinese, and the Russian. The reader, at least, may derive some hope that America will be spared the "greatness" achieved by France, China, and Russia through their revolutions from the fact that Conlin ends his book in near despair. America in general and the former leaders of the new left in particular, he moans, are not moving towards the socialist Utopia. Unfortunately, his despair is mollified by his faith in Tom Hayden, whom he styles as "the sole surviving son" of the 60's movement. In Hayden, Conlin sees a new prophet for American politics. Let us hope that Americans are perceptive enough to see the similarity between Hayden's prophetic mantle and a certain emperor's new clothes.

Fascist, as any schoolboy can tell you, is a word reserved for the use of the left when speaking about the right. It is indeed a word very much in vogue in contemporary liberal circles when speaking about the capitalist right. About thirty years ago, New Deal liberals commonly

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used the word to characterize Huey Long and Father Coughlin, the figures examined by Alan Brinkley in *Voices of Protest.* One might therefore suppose that they were right-wing radicals. They were radicals, certainly, but they were definitely not of the right. In his thorough, painstakingly researched book, Brinkley not only attempts to acquit Long and Coughlin of fascism, but he also (though probably unintentionally) exposes the unfairness with which the current liberal culture applies the charge.

To be sure, Brinkley does not whitewash Long or Coughlin. In what appears to be an evenhanded, intelligent study, Brinkley discusses not only the genuine talents and accomplishments of the two, but also their naiveté, egotism, and arbitrariness. The two men were, of course, very different, a fact Brinkley is careful to make clear. While Long rose from Louisiana's impoverished Winn Parish to become "the Kingfish," the absolute "Dictator" of Louisiana's political life through a combination of legal acumen, hard work, fiery rhetoric, and unscrupulous manipulating, Father Coughlin's ascent from a modest working-class neighborhood of Hamilton, Ontario to become America's "Radio Priest," the most listened-to voice on radio was more innocent, deriving simply from a bright mind and engaging Irish brogue, fortuitous timing, and a keen personal ambition for national influence. The two were similar in a number of ways, however. Most important of these was a shared disaffection for Roosevelt's New Deal. It was primarily for their unsuccessful attempts to substitute their own panaceas for the New Deal that 30's liberals, progressives, and socialists excoriated them as fascist demagogues. To those accustomed to the current usage of *fascist,* the tenor of Long's and Coughlin's "fascist demagoguery" will be surprising: Coughlin called for dramatic federal intervention in the banking system in a deliberately and radically inflationary way; Long called for the federal government to confiscate and redistribute the "excess" wealth of America's rich. Both attacked the New Deal for what they perceived as its excessive domestic conservatism, for its failure to intervene sufficiently in the economy, for its shortchanging America's veterans for the sake of balancing the budget. In a very real way, the aim of both men was, as one of Long's supporters put it, to "out-Roosevelt Roosevelt." True, there were, as Brinkley points out, elements in both men's ideology which were conservative: both denounced communism and internationalism and both decried the evils of intrusive bureaucracy (even while calling for more direct federal economic intervention). But no one, as Brinkley observes, could mistake the decidedly leftist elements of the panaceas they offered.

Brinkley's critique of both panaceas as deceptive and overly simplistic is doubtlessly accurate. Any conservative, even any New Dealer could see as much. Unfortunately, Brinkley uses his critique as the occasion for setting up a false dilemma: because of the problems created by capitalism, Brinkley contends, Americans must either embrace panaceas like Long's and Coughlin's or they must replace capitalism with socialism. It is painfully disappointing to see a man of Brinkley's talent and intelligence stoop to the kind of intellectual dishonesty which sets up a discredited straw man as the only alternative to its position. Fortunately, most 30's Americans knew that they were not faced with any such dilemma: most chose neither Long's or Coughlin's panaceas nor socialism, but rather FDR's New Deal—or Hoover's old one. Considering the leftist tendencies of their thought, it is hardly surprising that in private both Long and

LIBERAL CULTURE

Semiotics in Action

Semiotics, the latest rage among the cognoscenti and a branch of the "meaning" sciences, promotes, among other things, the thesis that human beings are the products of language, not the other way around. There's something to that proposition, and the complexities of the semiotic argument are profound. Simple illustrations of it, however, can be found in our weekly supermarkets for the middlebrows—*New York* magazine, for one. *NY* recently featured an awesome profile of Ms. Helen Gurley Brown, the editor and chief ideologue of *Cosmopolitan,* a female porno organ. This is how *New York* encapsulates Ms. Gurley's teachings:

> She believes the years between 18 and, say, 30 are for getting it on with as many men as a woman can handle.

What miracle of linguistics, semantics, semiotics, and of language making people. Ms. Gurley is called in the *New York* piece a publisher, an editor, and many other descriptive substantives that pertain to her personality. Not one single time, in any language from Sanskrit onward, did they use the word that has always denoted the profession or character of women who share Ms. Gurley's notions of how a woman should manage her life. And that word has served us so well for so long. □

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Coughlin expressed sympathy (albeit qualified and ambiguous) for socialism. Indeed, in a fascinating analysis of their supporters, Brinkley discovers that the people who followed Long and Coughlin were the same sort of people who found progressive and socialist politics appealing. Leftist politicians who denounced Long and Coughlin as fascists, believing that both they and their followers were intellectually superior to such demagogues, made the same discovery—to their horror. Many of these leftists, consequently, found hypocritical ways to accommodate themselves to the popularity of these "fascists." However, the left did not long have to accommodate themselves to that popularity. Long was assassinated before he could mount a serious challenge to FDR, and Coughlin degenerated into embittered anti-Semitism after unsuccessfully challenging FDR through the Union Party candidacy of William Lemke.

The years have not been kind to the memory of either man, for the "fascist demagogues" label has stuck. Brinkley attempts to remove the label *demagogue* from both men by arguing that as populist dissenters Long and Coughlin addressed genuine economic problems and represented some of "the oldest and deepest impulses in American political life." But quacks likewise represent old and deep impulses in American history and they likewise treat real illnesses; nevertheless, because their treatments are deceitful, they are still quacks. Brinkley's defense against the charge of fascism is more convincing, since it is true that Long seldom appealed to religious or racial hatred and that Coughlin did so only in his decline. Moreover, neither ever seriously attempted to suppress individual dissent, control the press, or circumvent free elections. Still the egotistic imperiousness of both men is troublingly like that of the fascist dictators. It is even more unsettling that many avowedly fascist intellectuals believed that both men were on the road to fascism. If they were traveling on this dead-end road, what are we to make of their popularity among leftist constituencies or of their private sympathy for socialism? Brinkley does not, unfortunately, pose the question, but his book makes it necessary: Could it be that the relationship between socialism and fascism is actually much closer than is commonly imagined? It is an especially pertinent question for American liberals who smugly denounce the capitalist right as *fascist,* never suspecting for a moment that fascism may actually be creeping up from the socialist left. □

What's News?

Richard Kostelanetz: *The Avant-Garde Tradition in Literature;* Prometheus Books; Buffalo, New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

Richard Kostelanetz is the author or editor of a number of books. Among them is one about which few have heard: *The End of Intelligent Writing: Literary Politics in America* (Sheed and Ward, 1973). It looks as if the reason why this book's appearance generated more silence than acclaim may be that in it Kostelanetz takes on what he terms "The New York Literary Mob," many of whom make up the staffs of what *Chronicles of Culture* calls the house organs of the Liberal Culture. Although we're certainly not in total agreement with him, Kostelanetz does make many valid points about the literary mafiosi in America; he scores a number of hits in what should be a shooting gallery of sitting ducks but what is, thanks to the domination of publishing by the targets, a duck blind beneath a starless night. To exemplify what Kostelanetz aims at, it would be appropriate to begin with his description of the you-scratch-my-back-I'll-scratch-yours situation that existed when Jason Epstein founded the *New York Review of Books* in 1963. At the time, Epstein was a Random House executive. As it wouldn't exactly be becoming for a publishing-house vice president to be operating a book review, Epstein didn't become the de jure editor. His wife did. Barbara Epstein became coeditor with Robert B. Silvers, positions which both retain today. Through an examination of early numbers of the *New York Review of Books,* Kostelanetz shows how numerous Random House-imprinted books were reviewed in the journal, often by people who had *their* titles published by the same house. Coincidence? Occam's Razor, I think, would slice in the direction of conspiracy, something which the *New York Review* crew knows all about, due to their adulation of the Chicago Eight.

It must be noted that *The End of Intelligent Writing* has been and should be criticized on a number of counts. While the book presents a great deal of presumably factual material, Kostelanetz is rather sloppy with his data (e.g., Steven Marcus's given name appears as "Stephen" in one place; *Commentary's* debut is dated both in 1944 and 1945). In some cases, Kostelanetz quotes someone because that quote supports his thesis, an approach that doesn't work primarily because he has already denigrated the speaker in an earlier section. More damning is the fact that the book is more than a little self-serving. In the preface, the then 33-year-old Kostelanetz discusses how he had talked with a number of American writers of all ages, then says, "Especially if they were equally young, I noticed that their sense of the writing world, as well as professional obstacles, resembled my own; if they were similarly experimental, in their sense of either writing style or personal activity, then our accounts were often identical. For that reason, most of my

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generalizations about 'young writers' or 'new writing' are also true of me." In other words, the book is slightly tainted with the flavor of sour grapes. He contends that there is a mob that controls what's reviewed, promoted, and thus read. These people, or mobsters, don't share his interests in, say, the late "great polyartist of modernism" L. Moholy-Nagy (so Kostelanetz calls him in *The Avant-Garde Tradition of Literature,* a book that's emerged from Buffalo, New York, not the City) and his kin, so by conducting a grand jury in print, I suspect, Kostelanetz wants to have the malefactors stand indicted—or at least shamed—and so, hopefully, repent. It is a curious attempt: who heard him railing in the empty room while the audience was elsewhere, observing those recommended by the guys and molls from New York?

There are many writers today about whom little is heard, or at least I've detected little discussion. They are worth auditing, for they very well may turn out to be the future in literature. Or they may all be simply gamesters and schemesters—though I personally doubt it. While I hold no brief for them, I think these writers should be examined. One is Raymond Federman, a proponent of "Surfiction," which he defines as "the only fiction that still means something today . . . that kind of fiction that tries to explore the possibilities of fiction; the kind of fiction that challenges the tradition that governs it; the kind of fiction that constantly renews our faith in man's imagination and not in man's distorted vision of reality—that reveals man's irrationality rather than man's rationality." Federman, the final clause notwithstanding, is not a lunatic. His word *surfiction* simply has its root in surrealism; about surrealists such as Breton, Soupault, and Eluard, Moholy-Nagy wrote: "They were eager to discover stimuli which had been neglected in the past because of an overzealous interpretation of reality based only upon familiar external experiences. Surrealism answered the official reality of daytime logic with the 'omnipotence of the dream.' With emphasis on the realm of the subconscious." Federman isn't far from Oscar Wilde's point about life reflecting art. Surfictioneers simply assert that individuals give meaning to exterior events as well as to internal feelings and thoughts. As such, fiction should not be seen as something chiseled in granite. That is, there *seems,* by common assent, to be a *correct* way to write fiction. The surfictioneers say that

is nonsense. For example, most readers are comfortable with a novel in which there are clearly defined characters who move through a recognizable setting. Science fiction, for example, is often not tolerated by readers because it can violate this convention with alien characters on a strange planet where accepted rules of logic don't apply. Moreover, the characters must operate within this setting in a reasonable manner toward a conclusive conclusion. Erotic literature, its other shortcomings aside, tends to be unacceptable because the characters function atypically (typical only of a French marquis or Hollywood producer) and the endings, if not death, are typically unfinished: nothing has been worked out; there would be, if the novel were to continue, simply more of the same. But the surfictioneers take the position that the readers of fiction are intelligent enough to divine their own meanings in novels; these writers insist on the right to be more allusive, to write *fictions.*

Ronald Sukenick writes in an essay that appears in *Surfiction* (Swallow Press, 1973) "The New Tradition in Fiction": "We have to learn to think about a novel as a concrete structure rather than an allegory, existing in the realm of experience rather than of discursive meaning and available to multiple interpretation or none, depending on how you feel about it—like the way that girl pressed against you in the subway." That simile is the best expression I've come across that describes this new trend—not tradition—in fiction. In a generally accepted novel of the early 20th century, the girl would press against an entrepreneur who happened to be in the subway by accident (his new automobile had a breakdown and there were no car-oriented mechanics in the business district). He would respond to the pressure by taking the underfed seamstress to dinner in a lush restaurant, where they'd be spotted by one of his wife's friends, who would then . . . There would be no deviation from this causal linking. In surfiction something could happen, everything could happen: whatever happens is basically up to the reader, who is forced to work with the writer. As Raymond Federman puts it: "Only through the joint efforts of the reader and creator (as well as that of the characters and narrators) will a meaning possibly be extracted from the fictitious discourse. The new fiction will not create a semblance or order, it will offer itself for order and ordering." In effect, then, two things are simultaneously happening in this approach to fiction. One: the surfictioneers are insisting that fiction and that which it reflects, life, are tentative, both existing to be given meaning. This accounts, for example, for the titles of two of Federman's novels: *Double or Nothing* and *Take It or Leave It*—a gamble and a choice. Two: they are pointing out that fiction is a construction, an artifact. One approach used by Walter Abish in *Alphabetical Africa* is to construct a novel around a modified lipogram: chapter titles are letters; within chapter A, for example, only words beginning with the letter *a* are used (e.g., "as author again attempts an agonizing alphabetical appraisal").

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Clearly, everyone in this post-Einstein world knows that all things are relative and that a novel is a fiction, a counterfeit of life. Things, however, are not what they seem. Novelists who create surfiction or otherwise break rules are—if they are recognized at all by any but their peers—typically dismissed as being experimental, something only to be bothered with by academics. But I must agree with Federman, who notes:

> Personally, I do not believe that a fiction writer with the least amount of self-respect, and belief in what he is doing, ever says to himself: 'I am now going to experiment with fiction; I am now writing an experimental piece of fiction.' Others say this about his fiction. The middle-man of literature is the one who gives the label EXPERIMENTAL to what is difficult, strange, provocative, and even original. . . . Fiction is called experimental out of despair.

In other words, those who are not in the mainstream of letters—not members of the mob, Kostelanetz would say—just don't make it, so they are condemned to wear the badge "avant-garde" and to form their own little coterie.

It must be pointed out that such fictions aren't often pleasant reading, though they are often amusing. The amusement, however, might stem from nothing more than the release of frustration. Sukenick's *Long Talking Bad Conditions Blues* (the blurb from the *New York Times Book Review* reads: "The very best sort of *experimental* writing by one of the very best writers of it" [emphasis mine]), for example, opens:

> from his apartment on Ferrell Anderson Place he liked to walk down to the quai which the local inhabitants referred to as The Reiser for reasons Carl was not able to determine but he somehow always lost his way on the way and found himself in a puzzle of winding and oblique streets complicated intersections which were not in themselves unpleasant in fact . . .

The use of ellipsis is mine, simply a nod to convention: Sukenick uses no commas, colons, semicolons, or end punctuation. The savvy reader of novels might think this another rendition of the Molly Bloom approach. Possibly, or a variation on Gertrude Stein. There's a page in the novel, 57, that only features that numeral in the upper right-hand corner, which could be traced back to Laurence Sterne. Maybe all of these conjectures are wrong. But Sukenick forces the reader to become involved or to dismiss the whole thing as superfluous.

Perhaps the whole thing—Sukenick, Federman, etc.—is superfluous. Maybe it's just childish puzzles: crossword and jigsaw. But the current situation brings to mind what was happening in *serious* literature in the early part of this century, the work of Wyndham Lewis, in particular. In June 1914 Lewis produced a periodical entitled *Blast: The Review of the Great English Vortex.* Contributors included Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound, and Rebecca West. About *Blast,* Marshall McLuhan wrote in *Counterblast:* "Lewis told me that he found it impossible to get it set up by any London printer whatever. He finally found an alcoholic ex-printer who agreed to set it up exactly as Lewis required in return for large supplies of liquor." Lewis's approach to graphics was unorthodox by his day's standards, just as Federman's is in his *Take It Or Leave It.* Lewis, Ford, Pound, West, and their associates, Joyce, Eliot, Wells, and others unquestionably had more influence on literature in this century than all but a few (Proust, Kafka), certainly more than today's touted writers will have. Yet in McLuhan's anecdote it's made clear that early leading-edge writers were sometimes forced to find alternative sources of publication as the then-reigning literary nabobs found the writers to be negligible upstarts. Similarly, few entrenched New York publishers of today seem to have what's called "venture capital" by industrialists in other fields. This money would be spent on possible new Lewises, Pounds, etc. This parsimony has another effect. Politically, the leading-edge authors now on the scene seem to be radical inasmuch as they are political—not particularly. Part of this probably stems from their forefathers, the dadaists and surrealists, some of whom admired the Bolshevik revolution since it initially appeared to them as a blow against restraints, which they read as freedom of artistic expression. However, the demands of proletcult and Stalin's retarded approach to art soon put an end to that interpretation. Still, a revolutionary hangover—a small but annoying one—remains for many in the world of art: the producers, that is. Surfictioneers are not noticeably accepted by the burghers of art, those who think in terms like "return on investment" and "bottom line" rather than "aesthetic value." Thus, possible conflict with the status quo, the "blasting" that Wyndham Lewis cried for.

Another effect is that the new fictioneers utilize two terms that inevitably cause the short hairs near the nape of the neck to tingle on those who still correlate semantics with ideological principle. The first is *collective,* as in Fiction Collective, the publisher of many of the leading-edge texts. Everyone knows what the word implies, but the connotation shouldn't be immediately applied in this case. That is, "limited partnership"—Ltd.—would be a good substitution for collective, except that the fiction being published under the Fiction Collective imprint is anything but restricted. The second term is *alternative,* as in alternative media, the types of journals that print and cover the works of the new fictioneers, as opposed to the *New York Review of Books* and its epigones. It should be noted that *Chronicles of Culture* is an alternative medium.

One of the tenets of Leopold Tyrmand, manifest in *Chronicles of Culture,* is that there are many writers—young ones, in particular—who have something to say that's intelligent, thoughtful, or simply fresh. These people—Catholics, conservative scholars, jazz buffs, fashion experts,

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Southerners, etc.—are decidedly not mainstream: because the stream is fed from the polluted spring in New York City. The reigning publishing houses and journals in that city decide who's who: who should be read, who isn't heard about. For example, Gore Vidal (published by Random House) inevitably appears blazoned on the cover of the *New York Review of Books* when he writes for it. Kurt Vonnegut is prominent in *The Nation*. I suspect that few have heard of Federman, Sukenick, or Abish. In a full-page ad recently sponsored by the Magazine Publishers Association, Inc. (575 Lexington Ave., New York, NY), what it terms "great writers of our time" are listed. It opens correctly enough with Fitzgerald and Hemingway; it moves to some good, not great, writers such as Dorothy Parker and James Thurber. The final seven names in its list of 24 are: Norman Mailer, John Updike, Tom Wolfe, Philip Roth, John Irving, Saul Bellow, E. L. Doctorow. Perspicacious or perverse? Of those seven who but Bellow will be remembered in the same league as Fitzgerald or Hemingway? Those who have written pieces for *The Rockford Papers* series "The Monumental Literature of Dwarfs" fly directly into the face of those touting Vidal, Vonnegut, Mailer, Doctorow, and others of their breed as "great writers of our time." Would the writers of that series find an outlet in which to voice such heretical statements in a mainstream journal?

A criticism often heard of *Chronicles of Culture* is that it is too "negative" in its approach to the leading fiction writers. However, when these writers, the darlings of the Liberal Culture, dominate the scene and thereby obscure the view of writers of talent like Kenneth Gangemi, Earl M. Rauch, those previously mentioned, and others, then it's clear that the mission of *Chronicles of Culture* must be to attempt to open the field in hopes that these others will rise. Perhaps the surfictioneers and the other modern writers are not in our philosophical camp. But it's obvious that if they are in the other camp, they only have the status of pets that are trotted out on occasion. In the meantime, the New York mafia breeds little Sontags and Barthelmes to take up the mantle when the originals become too hoary, and things go on, business as usual, the parasitic situation in which family writers are made by "family" critics, ad nauseam. If strident revisionism is necessary to put an end to this, then *Chronicles of Culture* must be —and is—in the avant-garde. While Mr. Kostelanetz and *Chronicles* are probably leagues apart on many issues, both share an acute concern with writing, its past, present, and future. □

The Distortion & Simplification Fiesta

Jonathan Schell: *The Fate of the Earth;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

Reading Jonathan Schell's *Fate of the Earth* is a dismal experience, but it reminds one of an old joke. A motorist stops to ask an elderly farmer for directions to his destination. The farmer replies, "Mister, there ain't no way to get there from here." We did not need Mr. Schell to tell us that we are in a dreadful state. We all know that. But the analysis he supplies is neither especially penetrating nor very reliable. And the course of action he recommends to get us from our present dilemma to the peace and safety we all desire is not likely to do any such thing. If there *is* a way "to get there from here," it is not in Schell's book.

The dilemma referred to is the threat posed by nuclear war. It is not necessary to espouse Schell's views in order to share his feelings about this subject, and his book, despite its many faults, is thought-provoking. And sometimes—though not very often—his prose is moving. Most of the book, however, substitutes philosophical disquisition for analysis of the actual situation and tends to evade strategic points. Schell is both wordy and dogmatic; his argument runs in circles for pages before making any, even an obvious, noncontroversial point.

Schell's argument can be reduced to two decisive contentions. First, that nuclear war not only can, but *must,* mean the utter destruction of both sides and, very possibly, of all mankind. (Though he draws back from insisting that war must mean the extinction of the whole of humanity, he assumes throughout that this is the case.) Second, that the only way to avoid a holocaust is to halt the arms race and to end national sovereignty, instituting a world government instead. All of this is expressed in assured, apocalyptic tones: "The question now before the human species, therefore, is whether life or death will prevail on the earth. This is not metaphorical language, but a literal description of the present state of affairs." The choice, as Schell sees it, is now between "peace on the one hand, and annihilation on the other . . . Two paths lie before us. One leads to death, the other to life."

Now, there is little doubt that, in certain circumstances, a nuclear exchange between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would largely destroy both countries, and probably most of the advanced countries of the northern hemisphere as well. But the direct, known effects of even such an all-out war would not exterminate humanity, although some side effect of the war could, conceivably, disrupt processes vital to the survival of life on earth. Some scientists fear that 10,000 megatons of thermonuclear explosives would generate sufficient nitrous oxide to damage the ozone layer, exposing the earth's surface to deadly levels of ultraviolet light. Schell goes on and on about how much worse it would

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be for the *whole* human race to be wiped out rather than just the combatant countries. Certainly total extinction is worse than a mere catastrophe, but I suspect that anyone who was undeterred by the destruction of Eurasia and North America would not be much moved by a threat to the whole race.

While Schell has raised a serious issue, his analysis of nuclear war is simplistic and dogmatic; in some ways it actually *under*states the danger. In Schell's view, any war is bound to be a total war of maximum destruction: both sides will try to destroy not only the enemy's military forces, but its entire society as well, and no defense—passive or active—could stop that. While Schell roundly denounces the superpowers for preparing to commit mutual genocide, he doubts that either would deliberately launch such a war. Rather, he believes the danger is that a war might grow out of a local crisis or begin by accident. Occasionally he suggests that the mere piling-up of arms *must* lead to a war that no one wants, but the overall impression given is that we face only a small possibility of total disaster. One could argue, however, that there is more likelihood of a deliberate war that would not be quite so destructive. Schell roundly ridicules the notion that any defense against nuclear attack can be constructed, and he rejects the possibility of what is called "limited nuclear war." His treatment of these problems is inadequate, even in the unlikely event that his assumptions are correct. He disregards the possibility of an active defense by antimissile missiles, lasers, or particle beams. Since this is the most critical unknown factor in the whole problem of nuclear war, his response is not reasonable. If an effective method of defense were developed by one side, it would make a successful war of aggression feasible. Schell's examination of civil defense is just as deficient. He is probably right to ridicule the notion of evacuation, but he confuses the whole fallout-shelter issue by blurring the distinction between shelters in target areas and fallout shelters in the rest of the country. Protecting the population of the cities against blast and fire may well be impossible; to protect people from fallout in areas well away from the explosions is very different, and it is possible that relatively simple measures would save millions of lives. Schell raises the objection that the Soviets might respond to a shelter program by merely increasing their arsenal, but this is neither certain nor conclusive. He winds up sniffing: "In the last analysis, however, the civil defense issue is a strategic, not a humanitarian question"—a statement as devoid of moral sense as any made by the nuclear strategists he attacks.

Schell either does not, or refuses to, understand the concept of "limited nuclear war." Admittedly, this is a confusing term, but there is nothing unreal about its concept. In many respects it is a more likely picture of events than Schell's picture of both sides trying to blast each other off the face of the earth. The most logical form of a Soviet first strike would be not an all-out attempt to wipe out the American population but an attack directed against our land-based missiles and bombers. This would leave America with only submarine-based missiles (assuming the Soviets did not find some way to attack them, too) which are useful only against Soviet cities. Our leaders would then be left with the choice between surrendering or wiping out part of the Soviet population. The latter course would not prevent the Soviets from launching a far more devastating attack against our people—most of whom would survive a Soviet first strike against military bases only. (It should be apparent that the phrase "limited nuclear war" is misleading, for a war of this type would be waged for the highest possible stakes. It would be limited only insofar as refraining from deliberately wiping out a whole civilian population can be called "limited.") Schell somehow finds it "dreamlike and fantastic" to think that the American leaders would "acquiesce in the Soviet first strike" without retaliating. It is, rather, Schell's ideas of what the Americans would do that are dreamlike and fantastic. They suggest that he is simply unwilling to work out the logical consequences of such a situation. He apparently cannot understand that in some circumstances a nuclear war could be won by a careful and clever aggressor—using a quantity of nuclear explosives small enough not to endanger the existence of all life, even if Schell's fears on that score are justified.

Schell's analysis of nuclear war is too simplistic to be useful. Unfortunately, this is also a flaw in his attempts to delve into the background of the nuclear threat and to propose a solution. In Schell's view, the very existence of the bomb, or more precisely the knowledge of how to build it, is the problem: "For the fundamental origin of the peril of human extinction by nuclear arms lies not in any particular social or political circumstances of our time but the attainment by mankind as a whole, after millennia of scientific progress, of a certain level of knowledge of the physical universe." Given this view, it is not surprising that at times he verges on condemning reason and science. Though he backs away from blaming scientists for our predicament, he does decide that: "rampant reason, man found, was, if anything, more to be feared than rampant instinct. Bestiality had been the cause of many horrors, but it had never threatened the species with extinction; some instinct for self-preser-

"*The Fate of the Earth* is an admirably serious book."
—*(London) Times Literary Supplement*

" 'The Fate of the Earth,' then, is not only a statement. It is a summons, an alarm, a commotion."
—*New York Times Book Review*

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vation was still at work. Only 'selfless' reason could ever entertain the thought of self-extinction."

Actually, the problem is *not* the mere existence of the bomb. If the whole world were run by a stable, democratic world government, who would worry if its forces commanded nuclear weapons? Even short of that utopia, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the threat of nuclear war is a unique development intimately related to specific social and political circumstances. Had the bomb been developed in a world where no totalitarian regimes existed—a world like the one that *did* exist before the year 1914—there would have been no decisive obstacle to arranging the international control of nuclear energy. It is hard to believe that the Entente and the Central Powers would not have dropped their rather minor differences had nuclear weapons appeared in 1910—World War I was possible only because no one realized how terrible a *nonnuclear* war would be. Alternatively, the bomb might have been developed in a situation where one nation already dominated the world and merely used it to back up its existing domination. In fact, the horrible situation that has developed since 1945 must be considered fantastically unlikely—i.e., the nation which first developed nuclear weapons not only failed to press its unique advantage, but failed to prevent its worst enemy from gaining them. One wonders whether any other country would have behaved like that, and it is doubtful whether it can be credited to reason of any sort.

Practically any regime other than a totalitarian one would have agreed to establish international control of atomic energy. This is no mere hypothesis: every country in the world outside the Soviet orbit *did* agree to the American plan for this in 1946. It is characteristic that Schell ignores this sole serious attempt made after 1945 to deal with the nuclear threat. Indeed, his only reference to the immediate postwar period is profoundly misleading; he comments that Bertrand Russell and Einstein "urged full global disarmament but their advice was disregarded." Both men in fact backed America's so-called Baruch plan. Russell —strange as it may seem in view of his later behavior—urged the U.S. to launch a preventive war against the Soviets if Stalin did not agree to stop his aggressions and allow international control of atomic energy. Schell makes a few references to the horrors of totalitarianism but fails to recognize that it is a key element in the situation he deplores.

All of the foregoing criticisms, however, could be ignored if Mr. Schell offered us a single sensible suggestion of what we could do to get out of this situation. But there is *nothing*. He even admits that he has left to others the "awesome urgent tasks" of re-examining the foundations of political thought which he deems necessary, or of devising practical steps. We are told that the salvation of the world requires total nuclear disarmament and the abolition of national sovereignty; i.e., a world government. How to achieve those noble aims, however, is left unsaid. Schell only tells us that he favors a freeze or reduction in arms and the mobilization of public opinion against nuclear weapons and in favor of a nonviolent world. Schell stresses that the world's political leaders

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture*:

Politics & Culture

"It is a widespread belief that we can learn lessons from reading history. Of course, it is not often said *what* it is that we can learn, and historians are divided as to what the lessons of history really are. The opinion of most seems to be that we should read history in order to observe its ironies. That is, no general pattern, no indication of design, no final triumph or final defeat of the human spirit seems to be registered there, only the frustrations of actors working at cross-purposes and the unintended consequences of policies once set in motion. The fact is that in reading history, people get out of it what they put into it."

from "Speculations on a Tendentious Science"
by John C. Cavazza

"Throughout [James] Thurber's letters . . . he never mentions culture explicitly. Nevertheless, all that he draws and writes is conditioned by his reliance upon it. He intuitively understands that without culture and the moral strictures upon which it is based there can be no humor and, therefore, none of the hilarious cartoons or witty stories at which he excelled. . . . Thurber recognized that a world devoid of a code of fundamental decency, order, and ethics is anything but a funny place to live."

from "Missives About Man"
by Carson Daly

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Perceptibles—Waste of Money
The American Proscenium—Stage—Screen—Art
Music—Correspondence—Liberal Culture
Social Register—Journalism—Polemics & Exchanges
In My Solitude

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threaten the use of nuclear weapons only with *our* permission: "At least this is true for the democracies. We do not know what the peoples of the totalitarian states, including the people of the Soviet Union, may want. They are locked in silence by their government. In these circumstances, public opinion in the free countries would have to represent public opinion in all countries, and would have to bring its pressure to bear, as best it could, on all governments." Schell's recommended course of action, obviously, would simply undercut the morale and position of the democratic world, and there is not a single reason to believe that it would bring about disarmament and peace. From an inadequate analysis of the problem, Schell thus arrives at a nonsolution, while telling us how bad it all is. But we already know how bad things are, even though most of us repress that knowledge most of the time. Thank you for nothing, Mr. Schell. □

The Visions Forever Green

Arnold Toynbee: *The Greeks and Their Heritages;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Mary Renault: *Funeral Games;* Pantheon Books; New York.

by Thomas Fleming

Modern man seems haunted by the specter of Greece. Like memories of childhood, the visions of ancient Athens and Sparta hold a place in our minds, forever green. It does not matter how we first formed the image—a translation of Homer, the illustrations in Bullfinch, the tales we had to translate in first-year Latin. However we were struck, the Greeks inevitably become and remain one of a civilized man's most splendid private possessions.

It is a rare body of literature—for that is what "Greece" really comes down to, literature—that can inspire such variegated poets as Chapman and Pope, Jonson and Shelley. It is small wonder, then, that so many literary and political ideologues have claimed the Greeks as their precursors and—by adoption—the champions of their causes. The citizens of Athens have been invoked as the patrons of liberal democracy, deism, free verse, and pederasty—not the best arguments for a classical curriculum. The Greek legacy, pulled and tugged in so many directions, has begun to resemble the corpse of Sarpedon over which so many Greeks and Trojans lost their lives, and, like Sarpedon—whom his father, Zeus, kept inviolate even in death—the legacy of Greece remains untarnished by its despoilers.

Arnold Toynbee, in his posthumously published *The Greeks and Their Heritages,* set out to explore the impact of Greek heritage upon the Greeks themselves. In only 270 pages, he managed to survey nearly four millennia of cultural history. Only Toynbee, even in his decline, could combine the necessary learning and audacity for such an undertaking.

The Hellenic Greeks—from Homer to Plato—were not unduly burdened by the past. They revered and sometimes worshiped the heroes of the Bronze Age: Achilles, Heracles, and Odysseus, whose memories were embedded in songs and rituals. But Hellenic cultural and social institutions were influenced very little by the civilization that collapsed soon after the Trojan War (after 1200 B.C.). So decisive was the "cultural discontinuity" in this so-called Dark Age that Greeks of succeeding generations, unable even to decipher the ancient scripts, were free to build their own civilization without the interference of their ancestors:

> The Mycenaeans did not dominate the Hellenes posthumously. So far from that, the Hellenes dominated Mycenaeans retrospectively. They reshaped, to their own liking, the image of the Mycenaean world.

Subsequent generations were, in Toynbee's opinion, not so fortunate. The achievements of Homer, Sophocles, and Demosthenes had, he suggests, a stultifying influence on Hellenistic literature by forcing upon it an artificial dialect (Attic) and antiquated literary models:

> Athens was now replaced by Alexandria as the Hellenic world's literary centre, but this transplantation was fatal to the creative power of the Hellenic Greeks' poetic genius. . . . And academic *Ersatz* for genuine poetic inspiration was provided by an Alexandrian scholar, Apollonius.

Toynbee apparently regarded all Hellenistic literature—apart from Theocritus—as stale and unoriginal. If anything, the reverse was true. Poets like Callimachus, who made a rare synthesis of erudition and colloquialism, accomplished a revolution more thorough (and far more successful) than the similar experiment of Pound and Eliot. If all Greek literature were represented only by Hellenistic writers like the authors included in the *Greek Anthology*—Polybius, Plutarch, and Lucian—it would still be a force with which to reckon.

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Greeks of the Byzantine period—the millennium stretching roughly from Justinian down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453—labored under a double handicap: not only was the literature "stultified" by the language and forms of Athens (dead for over a thousand years), but their political life was overshadowed by the Roman past (they even called themselves Romans). Toynbee, it must be said, is at home with the Byzantines. It is the one period he knew really well. In his chapters on Byzantium and modern Greece, he managed to convey a sense of the textures and qualities of Greek culture, something he was unable to do for earlier periods. Even so, it is hard to agree with his harsh assessments. It is true that Byzantine literature has few charms for the modern reader. The historians *are* regularly consulted and acknowledged as "significant," and the peculiar (*Byzantine* is the only epithet that comes to mind) charms of Michael Psellos and the Princess Anna Comnena *are* sometimes recognized. Still, the Greek imagination found its best expression in the liturgies and hymns of the orthodox church. A literary assessment which leaves those out (as seems inevitable in our era) is like a treatment of Southern literature that ignores political oratory. Toynbee—who judged all literature by the standard of Matthew Arnold—attributed the Byzantine failure to the persistence of koine, and even Attic Greek, as the exclusive literary language:

> There is no parallel in Greek cultural history to Western Christendom's successful effort . . . to liberate itself from the grip of the classical languages and literatures.

Toynbee, who has often insisted that his own education was essentially Greek, displays a fine sort of gratitude to the classical languages and literatures that made him what he was. But it is part of his Victorian illusion that cultures should be progressive and conform to the European model. There is, after all, nothing very strange about the retention of an ancient language for literary and educational purposes. In the Near East, we have the example of Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hebrew; of Sanskrit in India; of Chinese in Japan; and, in medieval (and modern) Europe, of Latin. It is pointless to speculate on what might have happened if Byzantine writers had written in demotic (colloquial) Greek. Perhaps a Dante or Shakespeare would have emerged, but it is just as likely that Byzantium would have sunk into the comfortable barbarism which most of the world's peoples—then and now—have enjoyed.

Contempt for formal language and literary tradition is an unfortunate part of our Romantic heritage, as it has been refined into the gospel of progress. The trouble with giving up the past is that it subjects us to Cicero's condemnation that ignorance of the past makes us eternal children. By ourselves, in a single generation, we can do little or nothing of value. When we fail to preserve what our ancestors have handed down to us, we find ourselves refighting their wars, rethinking their thoughts, and rediscovering their wheels. Generations that seem to accomplish the work of an eon always owe their success to a rich inherited tradition. Try to imagine Periclean Athens without Homer, Solon, and Cleisthenes, or the Renaissance without the Middle Ages.

We live, to be sure, in an age that takes pride in its liberations from the past. Our poetry and our music owe little, if anything, to tradition. Our poets have succeeded in abandoning all the trappings of rhyme, meter, structure, form, and—most recently—English syntax. Theirs is a pristine and private art, utterly individual, absolutely ignored; given another millennium of development, Charles Olson's disciples might well produce poetry equal to the best of the Earl of Surrey, but it will be an enormous task.

In the end, Toynbee's vision of classical Greece was simply progressive. To that exacting standard, no age of successors can measure up. Mary Renault's latest novel, *Funeral Games,* offers another sort of impossible standard by which to condemn the Hellenistic Greeks: the internationalist dreams of Alexander the Great. With this novel, Mrs. Renault completes the tribute to Alexander begun in *The Fire From Heaven* and *The Persian Boy*. Like its predecessors, *Funeral Games* has nothing that could be called a plot. It is the story of Alexander's successors, the generals and relatives who dismembered his short-lived empire. Although her story

LIBERAL CULTURE

On Certitudes

In an essay in the *New York Times Magazine*, Irving Howe—an eminent literary critic, a social democrat, a man of reason and integrity—makes a momentous announcement:

> God died in the 19th century, utopia in the 20th.

The first part of the sentence is, to our mind, at best naive: how does Mr. Howe know about God's death? As to the second part, we can only say the word long ago consecrated by God: *Amen.* □

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begins with his death, this is still a novel about Alexander. His successors are haunted by the memory of their great leader, whose corpse is so significant that his generals are willing to fight for it.

There are certain periods of history so interesting that no one, not even a novelist or a historian, can make them dull: Rome in the days of Cicero and Caesar, England under the Stuarts, Japan under Ieyasu. The Mediterranean world in the time of Alexander was not blessed with Cicero's speeches and Caesar's *Commentaries:* its history was preserved by such valuable writers as Arrian, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius. To be candid, a literate reader is more likely to derive pleasure from rereading Arrian and Plutarch than from looking through Mrs. Renault's trilogy.

It is not that she does not know how to write a novel—her arrangement of material is often very clever—or that she has not mastered the sources—errors are rare indeed. The problem lies in her vision of the Greeks and her perception of their characters. After reading one of her novels, the reader is likely to feel that Alexander, Ptolemy, and Aristotle are real men, not of the 4th century B.C. but of the 20th A.D. In the novels of the trilogy, any character that conflicted with Alexander is revealed as flawed, narrow-minded, and self-serving. Alexander *may* have condescended to Aristotle and Demosthenes; it is not an attitude that suits a writer of best-sellers.

We do not turn to imaginative literature for academic and balanced verdicts on historical personages; we look for conviction. Shakespeare's Richards and Henrys may be worthless as historical studies, but they do embody a sort of English prejudice which is the next best thing to intuition. There is more to Johnson than Boswell's life, more to Scott than his son-in-law could comprehend, but Johnson and Scott live for us today principally as their biographers' creations. None of Renault's characters carry the conviction either of the dramatist or of the biographer. Her generals are thoroughly modern men, corporate schemers whose lives have been spoiled by their parents.

It may be unfair to blame a novelist for sharing the vices of an age. The trend of modern fiction requires a novelist to render all the tics and quirks of a character. Publishers hand out checklists of 37 character traits (I have seen one) that a writer needs to establish for each character. Even more enervating is the compulsion to "analyze" characters by establishing probable motives and causes in the character's psychohistory. Alexander is scarred—most improbably for a Greek or a Macedonian—by the sight of his naked father, whom he grows to hate. Ambitious sons do not usually need Dr. Freud to tell them that they envy their father's power. All these quirks and motives succeed only in diminishing Alexander's stature. Plutarch, the greatest gossip of ancient literature, recognized that "a trifling incident" can "show more of his character than the battles where he slays thousands"; nonetheless, he knew the value of selection, and he concentrated, "as portrait painters concentrate on the eyes and face," on things that "express the soul." In Mary Renault's treatment, Alexander emerges as genuinely heroic only after his death makes further description and analysis impossible.

It is hard to imagine a successful novel about Alexander. The great historical novels—Scott's *Waverly,* Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* and *Barry Lyndon*—conspicuously avoid great men as central characters. It is interesting to compare Thackeray's failure to bring off George Washington in *The Virginians,* where he is a major character, with his success in catching something of Samuel Johnson in Barry Lyndon's recollections:

> He drank tea twice or thrice at my house, misbehaving himself most grossly; treating my opinions with no more respect than those of a schoolboy; and telling me to mind my horses and tailors and not trouble myself about letters.

LIBERAL CULTURE

Liberal Elegance

The Nation has imported from Britain a pinko-punk, one Christopher Hitchens, to report on the American political scene with the English liberal left's famous touch of class. Here is how it enriches American political literature. Mr. Hitchens is commenting on the conservatives' disenchantment with President Reagan. First he makes a generalized intellectual statement:

> The conservative mind is no more subtle than it is elegant.

Next comes a circumstantial political observation:

> The original annoyance of the right was the exclusion of its cadres from Reagan's inner circle.

Finally we read a publicistic metaphor of his highest-quality writing:

> Their snouts are just not in the trough.

What elegance of argumentation. What finesse of style. □

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It is a cliché of criticism that Homer displayed his genius nowhere so much as in his portrait of Helen. Since no one could describe her divine beauty, he let the whole Trojan War stand as her memorial.

Still, there is something to be said for Mrs. Renault: she sells. Her career, based on one gimmick and a modest talent, is a real tribute to the power which the Greeks still have over our imaginative life. Think of it: Chapman's and Pope's Homer, Byron's stanzas on the Isles of Greece, the novels of Mary Renault. Each generation makes its judgment on the Greeks, and—in the declension from Pope to Renault—what a judgment the Greeks have made on us. □

Subtle Torments & Brutal Realities

Aharon Appelfeld: *The Age of Wonders;* David R. Godine; Boston.

Cynthia Ozick: *Levitation: Five Fictions;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Will Morrisey

These books suggest that something more than custom or prejudice separates Jews from the rest of us. Jews struggle with Gentiles, with God, with themselves, but the struggle that scars them most deeply began in Eden: the struggle with nature. Nature in its simplest aspects—brutal and seductive, stubborn and malleable—ceaselessly provokes their fascinated distrust.

Aharon Appelfeld lives in Israel and writes in Hebrew; neither his country nor his language fits easily into the world. He has learned some of his techniques from this century's virtuoso of fascinated distrust, Franz Kafka. But, unlike the writer in *The Age of Wonders,* Appelfeld is no simple Kafka devotee; he uses what he's learned for a purpose. He has discovered that the Kafkaesque captures childhood: a time when the child can't comprehend all that occurs, so be builds a world on guesses and wonders at the rest. The writer depicted is the father of the narrator. Father's devotion to art, particularly Kafka's art, substitutes for his ancestors' devotion to Judaism. His aesthete's humanism finds its echo in liberal politics; "very close to Stefan Zweig" and, like him, an Austrian Jew, Father shares Zweig's horror of violence and fondness for political and cultural internationalism. Assimilated as he can be, Father curses Jews and Judaism with the 1930's intellectual's blackest word: "petit-bourgeois." Like childhood, the 1930's was an age of wonders. Metamorphoses proliferated, as life imitated Kafka. The narrator's teenage aunt suffers a nervous breakdown, converts to Christianity, and dies, inspiring Father's praise of her "true religious feeling." A lifelong friend of the family, a sculptor, offspring of a mixed marriage, converts to Judaism and provokes Father's drunken rage against the "loss" of a fine artist. ("Your father, Austrian by birth, left you land, health, hands fit to carve stone, and you want to exchange this health, this freedom, for an old, sick faith. Take pity on your freedom, take pity on your body, which never had to suffer a senseless mutilation.")

More metamorphoses occur. A critic attacks Father's writings because they concern Jews, albeit secularized ones, "parasites living off the healthy Austrian tradition." A young peasant woman arrives from Father's native village; her presence in the household causes Father and his friends to go on a series of binges. The family adopts an orphan who stays with them until the end, "perhaps because she had lost something in our house, that animal vitality that makes men brave." Mother responds to their increasing social ostracism with "a strange self-denying piety . . . as if she were purposely imposing hardships on herself." Sickness and health, decadence and freedom, fear and bravery and guilt: it is the language of fashionable Nietzscheanism. Nietzsche despised anti-Semitism, but he also detested the Christianity that emerged from Judaism and, he said, from Platonism. Christianity, Judaism, and Platonism set inhibiting ghosts above life. Only nature and art, merged into "creativity," yield strength. " 'I deny,' thundered Father, 'the Judaism others attribute to me.' " Father, too, metamorphoses. He begins as an "Austrian" writer "drunk with success," a novelist, playwright, essayist, and editor of the journal of the Jewish-Christian League. He ends as a pariah who leaves his family for Vienna, hoping to co-found, with a sympathetic baroness, a liberal salon aimed at saving Austria from anti-Semitism. By now it is 1939.

Almost all of Appelfeld's self-denying Jews hunger for nature but fail to conquer it. They lust after the approval of Austrian men and favors from peasant girls. They drink, lurching after Nietzsche's Dionysus. They fool no one. An Austrian intellectual confides to Father that he can always tell a Jew because the Jew looks anxious, while the Austrian "never blames himself or anyone else." In the end, as the Jews are collected in the town synagogue to await the arrival of the cattle train to the camps, businessmen snarl about "decadent artists;" Mother cries, "Shopkeepers!" and everyone blames the rabbi—who, indeed, called them there without saying why.

In the novel's second part, it is 1965. Bruno, the narrator, returns to his native town from Jerusalem. "[F]or Bruno, everything held a baffling, wondering question." His father's life is "the disgrace he had not dared to touch, seething silently all these years like pus inside a wound." Even in death, Father and sickness go together, and Bruno searches, if not for the cause of that sickness, perhaps for its meaning. Meaning doesn't come cheaply for Appelfeld's

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characters. An uprooted Japanese student tries unsuccessfully to engage Bruno in a conversation on the subject of life's meaning. A part-Jewish nightclub singer wonders if there is any place on earth for her; a hack would have Bruno exalt her with a vision of Jerusalem—Appelfeld spares us that. We hear of the town, which hasn't changed, and the people, who have—the Jews are gone, and the people who remain partake of the combined perpetuation and metamorphosis nature imposes. A few Jews who had metamorphosed themselves into Christians also survive. Bruno remembers many members of one such family who had the courage to go to the synagogue on that last day; only they, "their strange integrity intact, had chosen death with their eyes open. . . . The rest had coveted life, and they had been absorbed by it." Life did not entirely absorb some ex-Jews. In 1939, a Jew named Brum married his housemaid and metamorphosed himself into an imitation Austrian. "He grew taller, his shoulders filled out, and a luxuriant moustache appeared on his face; he sat with his new wife in the cellar . . . drinking beer." The anti-Semites left him alone. Yet when Bruno finds him, Brum complains about his ex-wife, "a whore." Woman-as-betrayer: the would-be Austrian relives a Jewish story as old as Genesis.

Jews never quite get inside life, nature. Thinking of the unchanged buildings and trees of the town, Bruno sees that "objects survive longer" than people: "[T]hey are passive. Otherwise how could they withstand such changes? Could it be said, perhaps, that they lack sensitivity?" Non-Jews, at home with nature, imitate its indifference. They change little, but that change usually amounts to slow degeneration. Austrians, who supposedly never blame themselves or anyone else, gradually started to blame the Jews for everything; decades later, they cannot really face a Jew who returns. Their indifference is imperfect. Irremediably conscious, Jews face life with anxiety, but they can face death with open eyes. Nietzsche condemns those who exhort men to learn how to die. He commands men to live. Nonetheless, we must notice that the one person in Appelfeld's book who does not change is the one closest to death, Bruno's step-grandmother Amalia, an observant Jew whose words had a "certainty . . . forged with steel. . . . There was power in her voice: next to her we felt small." The narrator's embarrassed parents put her into a sanatorium. Nietzsche's life ended in a sanatorium, after life had metamorphosed him not into his chosen "Overman" but into a catatonic —an object.

> "Why does one of our best writers, a woman, join the chorus of male voices?"
> —*Ms.*

Appelfeld's measured, delicately shaded style is thoroughly European. Cynthia Ozick's "five fictions" contain allegory, history, myth, fantasy, criticism in an exuberant mixing that goes well with contemporary America, where Jews don't quite fit in, either, but where the difference brings no slaughter. In Appelfeld's world sadness overshadows comedy; in Ozick's we can afford to laugh.

Still, fire burns upward in America as it does in Europe. Nature remains intractably natural, as Ozick's Jews (and some of her non-Jews) learn. The title story presents the theme. A husband and wife, novelists, he Jewish and she a convert from Protestantism, throw an unsuccessful literary party ("My God," he gasps, revealing a kind of religiosity, "do you realize *no one came?*"). The ambition to host a party to attract "luminaries" (Howe, Sontag, Kazin, Fiedler, Podhoretz, Hardwick—invited, obviously, for the glow of their fame, not for their congeniality) mirrors the couple's obsession: "they were absorbed by power . . . and were powerless." They feel "counterfeit pity" for the characters they create and, one suspects, for the people they encounter. They reserve genuine pity for themselves—he, because he is a Jew, she, because she is a woman. Confronted by the failure of their modest power venture, they return to the surer territory of being victims. For the husband, this means speaking to the guests who did come of "certain historical atrocities" committed by non-Jews against Jews, culminating in the Holocaust. For the wife, it means listening to the stories and seeing her own isolation: "It seemed to her that the room was levitating. . . . She felt herself at the bottom, below the floorboards, while the room floated upward, carrying Jews" elevated by "the glory of their martyrdom." She has another vision, a vision of "the goddess." Giving every evidence of having read Robert Graves, she regards the Madonna, Venus, Aphrodite, and Astarte as successive incarnations of "eternal" nature, of nature's fertility, eros, and solidity. "Lucy sees how she has abandoned nature, how she has lost true religion on account of the God of the Jews," who inspires "morbid cud-chewing" and talk of "Death and death and death." Ozick has comically presented the same contrast Appelfeld presents sadly. Jews levitate, non-Jews luxuriate (or wallow, depending on their upbringing). The nature that seems to satisfy much of humanity most of the time cannot satisfy Jews.

Ozick explores this in each of her fictions. In "From a Refugee's Notebook," we read an essay on Freud, who "lust[ed] to become a god absolute as stone" by imposing his psychoanalytic paradigm on nature. As Moses invented the Sabbath, that interruption of nature, Freud invented "a Sabbath of the Soul," a rationalistic attempt to capture, or conquer, the irrational. The essayist sees the problem: this conquest, attempted by rational means, owes its origin to a fascination with the irrational; "it may be that the quarry is all the time the pursuer." The same "Notebook" also contains an account of life on the planet Acirema, where "the more sophisticated females" attempt to conquer nature by a

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novel means of birth control. It doesn't always work, and the women learn that the resultant children, raised communally in this "community of philosophers," interfere with their "self-development." Children, i.e., the future, are discovered to be regrettably "anti-progressive." Although undeniably "central to the community . . . morally and philosophically, they had no right to exist." Acirema's civilization, such as it is, gradually crumbles under the weight of this contradiction as the neglected children, the only ones who reproduce, take over.

Nature teaches its most painstaking, and pain-giving, lesson to Ruth Puttermesser, a liberal Jewish lawyer who appears in both a short story and a novella. We meet her at age 34, leaving Wall Street to work in city government and "looking to solve something, she did not know what." She has a sensible, private vision of Paradise—a tree to sit under and an inexhaustible supply of books and chocolate. In the novella, 12 years in the city bureaucracy have induced her to envision a more grandiose Paradise. Demoted, then fired during a political shake-up, she dreams of making a golem (a dream of Pygmalion), knowing that learned Jews have occasionally resorted to golem-making in times of danger. Her golem, a female, wants to be called Xanthippe, on the grounds that Socrates' wife criticized even Socrates, the arch-critic who built a Paradise in words, reforming the corrupt Athens of actuality. Puttermesser's golem rids the city of corrupt politicians by installing her maker as mayor, who then fulfills the liberal reformer's dream, replacing the pols and incompetents with idealists. The dreamers finally have complete power, and New York becomes "a rational daylight place," orderly and pleasant. Plato's Republic as conceived by John Gardner. But nature, driven out of the golem, stubbornly returns. The golem lusts after Puttermesser's former lover; eros "enter[s] Gracie Mansion." The golem tells Puttermesser, "I want a life of my own. My blood is hot." What the golem did, the golem undoes, and in the end Puttermesser understands that "Too much Paradise is greed. Eden disintegrates from too much Eden. Eden sinks from a surfeit of itself." She has learned what Ozick's photographer learns in the book's most intriguing story, "Shots." A photographer can save truth by arresting its attacker, time. But even in possessing truth, she cannot *become* truth. Nor can she *make* it. She remains outside, taking pictures. That goes for writers, dreamers, and politicians, as well.

Ozick has said that she wants someday "to drill through the 'post-modern' and come out on the other side, alive and saved and wise as George Eliot." That would entail a reconciliation of "is" and "ought," nature and idea—a reconciliation unknown to modernity, including the part of modernity that imagines itself postmodern. The older traditions at least give the appearance of effecting this reconciliation. On what terms can we return to them? Appelfeld and Ozick have yet to discover a way. They do identify false ways, however, which always needs to be done. In their search, they have more allies than they believe. Non-Jews, as well, cannot quite satisfy themselves with things as they are, or believe what ideologues tell them should be. □

Hollywood Revisited

Louise Brooks: *Lulu in Hollywood;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Joseph McBride: *Hawks on Hawks;* University of California Press; Berkeley.

by Mary Ellen Fox

Next to the American West, has any region exerted a greater pull on our collective imagination than Hollywood? Both have transcended the notion of mere locale and become part of the national mythology, complete with gods and demons, heroes and scoundrels. Louise Brooks has emphasized the legend; Howard Hawks contributes to its debunking.

Born in the Bible Belt in the first decade of the century to a comfortable middle-class family with cultural and intellectual leanings, Louise Brooks studied dancing, went to New York, and became a chorus girl. Aided by her beauty and extraordinarily individual looks particularized by her shiny jet cap of hair (did the style of the 20's invent her or she it?), she quickly became involved with numerous wealthy men who originated the Manhattan café society. Like many other chorus girls, Brooks went to Hollywood to make silent movies. However, her need for independence, her rebelliousness, and her downright contrariness conflicted with the businesslike, pragmatic world view of the men who ran Hollywood; this tension flavored her career and was responsible for its brevity. Her great triumphs were not in the U.S. but in Europe. Summoned to Germany by director G. W. Pabst, Brooks made two outstanding silent movies which have transformed her into a cult figure: *Pandora's Box* and *Diary of a Lost Girl.* Her veneration of Pabst contrasts distinctly with her contempt for American moviemakers. Despite opportunities to stay in Europe and star in other movies there, Brooks's natural waywardness, coupled with her unbridled hedonism, catapulted her into one reckless affair after another. This lack of discipline in both her personal and professional lives caused her to cavalierly disregard all the possibilities that Europe offered and to return to Hollywood, where conflict and disagreement soon aborted her career.

Her book is a compendium of articles written over the last 25 years for various publications such as *Sight and Sound, Film Culture, London Magazine,* and

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Image. Whatever lack of inner order grounded Brooks's career in Hollywood is not apparent in her writing, which is clean, terse, and to the point. Most noteworthy are the pieces on Bogart and on Pabst. The actor is presented as an unsuccessful, pretty young man of the theater ("Humphrey") who, partly through his own efforts, partly through Hollywood's, and partly through the independent mushrooming of the Bogart legend, became "Bogey," the tough, taciturn loner that we still admire today. In the piece on Pabst, Brooks reveals at least as much of herself as she does of the great German director. It is obvious that with *Pandora's Box,* Pabst forged an actress from the still-raw material of Brooks. He also created an archetype: Lulu, the embodiment of an atavistic sexuality that thoroughly but heedlessly destroys everyone including herself. "Your life is exactly like Lulu's," Pabst once told Brooks, "and you will end the same way."

To see how right—and how wrong—Pabst was, it is helpful to supplement *Lulu in Hollywood* with a piece by Kenneth Tynan published in *The New Yorker* in 1979 entitled "The Girl in the Black Helmet." Reading it, one is overcome by a sadness that only waste and the trashing of the beautiful can inspire. When Tynan finally met Brooks, after decades of marveling at her extraordinary presence on film, he saw a birdlike, crippled old woman. Brooks was invited by the director of the International Museum of Photography, founded by George Eastman (of Eastman Kodak), to Rochester, New York, where she now lives: penurious, bedridden, and alone. Yet this was the actress of whom Henri Langlois, founder of the Cinemathique Française, once said, "There is no Garbo! There is no Dietrich! There is only Louise Brooks!" Her career compassed a mere dozen years and two dozen movies, of which only a handful were noteworthy. Yet Ado Kyrou, a French critic, could assert, "Louise Brooks is the only woman who had the ability to transfigure no matter what film into a masterpiece. . . . Louise is the perfect apparition, the dream woman, the being without whom the cinema would be a poor thing."

The underlying accusation of *Lulu in Hollywood* is that the moguls, businessmen, producers, investors, directors, actors, all those in fact who made up the Hollywood film factory, were to blame for the failure of the careers of Louise Brooks and others like her to come to fruition. The Hollywood system, then and now, it is implied, is never able to cope with independent spirit or artistic integrity, and sees nothing, in fact, except the so-called bottom line. However, it is too simplistic to point the accusatory finger at Hollywood alone. Like so many other beautiful and talented actresses, Brooks achieved greatness and simultaneously destroyed her life. The Tynan piece throws into focus many elements of Louise Brooks's private life which are not touched in *Lulu in Hollywood*. Her life is less tragic, less melodramatic than those of Monroe or Harlow or Frances Farmer, but no less poignant when potentiality and actuality are compared. Pabst instinctively recognized his Lulu in Brooks. But while Lulu had victims, Brooks has only one: herself. And unlike Lulu's, her life ultimately became self-conscious, self-aware, and articulate.

If *Lulu in Hollywood* presents Hollywood the myth, then *Hawks on Hawks* presents Hollywood the reality.

The key to success in the movie business, as perceived through the career of Howard Hawks, is simple: hard work. Hawks, a Midwesterner like Brooks, and of the same generation, began in the property department at Famous Players-Lasky Studio during vacations from Cornell University. His architectural and engineering studies came in handy there, and his sets attracted the attention of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. Pickford made Hawks her property man, then assistant director, and then substitute director of *The Little Princess* in 1917 when the director became drunk. His training came through making one-reel pictures, a thorough grounding in comedy technique. He produced a handful of movies in the early 20's, then made a successful transition to the talkies. Hawks was more than simply a director; he was always actively involved in writing scripts, and he collaborated with some of the best writers of the day: Hecht, MacArthur, Hemingway, Chandler, and Faulkner. His most famous movies featured classic performances from Hollywood's finest: Paul Muni in *Scarface;* Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant in *Bringing Up Baby;* Carole Lombard and John Barrymore in *Twentieth Century;* Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell in *His Girl Friday;* Gary Cooper in *Sergeant York;* Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in *The Big Sleep;* Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes;* John Wayne in *Rio Bravo*. As this list indicates, Hawks was at ease with everything from screwball comedy to gangster epics, from serious drama to Westerns.

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In *Hawks on Hawks*, Joseph McBride interviews the director; the comments and analyses Hawks brings to bear on the subject of moviemaking are consistent and of a piece: his approach is pragmatic and businesslike. These statements sum up the cinematic philosophy of Hawks in the most concise way: "Our job is to make entertainment. . . . You aren't going to get enough money to work with unless you get it out of universal entertainment. . . . I've worked on the profits of my pictures . . . so I'm damned interested in how much they gross." Hawks's emphasis in his work was always on the highest quality of craftsmanship and so his movies lack the self-consciousness of the products of most of today's directors—who perceive themselves as artists. (Hawks refers to "pictures" or "movies," never to "films" or "the cinema.") The only message he endorsed was to entertain, an attitude that appears time and again in his conversations here and which assured him consistent box-office success. It also contributed to the universal appeal of his movies, which transcend time and so are as enjoyable and fresh today as they were when first presented. What was conceived as craftsmanship endures as artistry. The fusion of Hollywood as both industry and entertainment was not only the reality of moviemaking but, judging by Hawks's commentary, the ideal as well. The system was good: it worked, it produced the largest number of successful movies, the ones the public wanted. In effect, the financial failures were usually those that failed to satisfy their audience.

The pivotal differences, then, in the attitudes of Louise Brooks and Howard Hawks can be encapsulated in two anecdotes. Brooks, lacking any advanced formal education, was horrified that a journalist who interviewed her for *Photoplay* was ignorant of and indifferent to the existence of Martha Graham. As Brooks writes: "I didn't realize then that this small cultural conflict . . . was merely the first instance of the kind of contempt that was destined to drive me out of Hollywood." Whereas Hawks, college educated and perhaps more at ease with intellectuality, who mixed socially with the best writers of his era, could only be amused at a similar lack of cultural awareness. On a hunting trip with Clark Gable and William Faulkner, the talk turned to writing. "Gable asked Faulkner who the good writers were. And Faulkner said, 'Thomas Mann, Willa Cather, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway and myself.' Gable looked at him and said, 'Oh, do you write, Mr. Faulkner?' And Faulkner said, 'Yeah. What do *you* do, Mr. Gable?' " And Hawks adds with amusement, "I don't think Gable ever read a book and I don't think Faulkner ever went to see a movie. So they might have been on the level." □

Uncle Sam's Other Province

***A Band of Prophets: The Vanderbilt Agrarians After Fifty Years;* Edited by William C. Havard and Walter Sullivan; Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.**

***Regionalism and the South: Selected Papers of Rupert Vance;* Edited by John Shelton Reed and Daniel Joseph Singal; University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill.**

by Clyde Wilson

The intellectual history of the South is yet to be written. By this statement I am bootlegging in two premises. First, that there *is* such a thing as the South with a distinctive history. Second, that Southern history includes an intellectual life worthy of study. Though persons can be found to controvert the first premise, they can easily be dealt with: their position—that there is no distinctive South—is essentially either perverse ideological reasoning (the South is bad, therefore its existence must be discounted as a temporary aberration) or materialist reductionism (the South doesn't exist because it can't be counted).

Concede, then, a distinctive Southern history, but what about its intellectual life? Here it is harder to make headway. That the South has, throughout its existence, had a life of the mind important enough for historical attention is not an uncontested thesis. Even many who are aware of the importance of 20th-century Southern literature are not aware of or not willing to concede anything of importance before this century. This scholarly consensus is mistaken. Richard Beale Davis, in his immense work *Intellectual Life in the Colonial South,* proved both the presence and the distinctiveness of a life of the mind in the colonial-era South. The 19th-century Southern intellect still awaits its great historian, but he will appear. That intellect is underrated simply because it is unknown. Everyone thinks he already knows what the writers and thinkers of the Old South had to say, so nobody has ever bothered to read them. Sooner or later someone will; Jefferson and Poe, George Washington Harris and Joel Chandler Harris, William Gilmore Simms, John C. Calhoun and others will be woven together into a meaningful picture. When that is done, at least two things will be established. First, that there was no great discontinuity in values between the Jeffersonian generation and the Confederate generation of Southerners, contrary to what has so often been declared. Second, that the 19th-century Southern mind was quite the opposite of its currently popular image—that it was classical rather than romantic, critical and ironic rather than simple and hyperbolic. But that is another story.

The 20th-century Southern mind has

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been explored somewhat more thoroughly, especially its literary aspects, but it, too, still lacks its historian. When that historian appears, these two works will be valuable grist for his mill. In *A Band of Prophets* a group of mature Southern scholars considers the meaning of the now-famous Agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand. Regionalism and the South* is a collection of writings by an eloquent antagonist of the Twelve Southerners of the manifesto—Rupert Vance of the University of North Carolina, who, besides his significance as a key Southern liberal thinker, is an important figure in the development of American sociology. Thus, with the protagonists of these two books the scene is set for a classic 1930's confrontation of progress and reaction.

The South *is* different. Even when Southerners do the same things as other Americans, it is often for different reasons. They sympathized with Richard Nixon, for instance, not because they thought he was any good, but because they thought he was no worse than his enemies. The South is America's Basque provinces—a region which has always contributed more than its share to the nation, yet one that is not quite a respectable part of it; it is the most conservative part of the nation, yet it is particularist and runs athwart the mainstream even when the mainstream flows conservative. The Agrarians of *I'll Take My Stand* would seem to fall to the right of any American center line, but one wonders if they fit into the national left/right dialectic at all. When William F. Buckley, Jr. edited an anthology of American conservative writing a few years ago, he did not include any of the Agrarians, nor even so relevant a follower of theirs as Richard Weaver; yet he included a number of writers and themes that could not seriously be considered "American."

Southern liberals have almost as much difficulty fitting in as Southern conservatives. In fact, one may safely maintain that no Southerner can ever be fully respectable as a liberal. No matter what excesses he may indulge in to expunge his taint, he will never succeed. Jimmy Carter knew the things one had to say and do, and he said and did them. But many Americans simply could not accept his performance. (The same thing happened to Truman and Johnson, which indicates the degree to which liberalism embodies ritualistic role-playing rather than substantive issues.) Unwittingly, by his frantic effort to live up to the role expected of him, Carter exhibited how mechanical and formalistic and empty liberalism had become and thereby rendered a great service.

If it were not already a cliché, I would be tempted to suggest that American conservatives are largely 19th-century bourgeois capitalists (though never quite as consistent in practice as in theory) and American liberals are 20th-century social democrats (except that whereas European social democrats are fueled by class antagonism, American ones are driven by puritanical fury and hypocrisy). Southerners, on the other hand, whatever side they might come down on in national politics, are still 18th-century republicans in their basal political instincts. They have always had—and still have—by and large a different sense of the dividing line between the public and the private, a different sense of the range and purposes of the state. This outsider viewpoint has its uses. George Wallace was hated by both liberals and conservatives, but by coming, as it were, out of another league, he was able to upset the convenient and self-serving way the game was being played by the major teams and to restore some competition to the contest. His smashing of the phony consensus of the early 1960's by his success at raising neglected issues during the Northern primaries was a decisive element in establishing the current political dialectic. Its power, for example, is forcing the Republican Party toward a grassroots conservative position that it would never have adopted on its own and against which it struggles.

Rupert Vance was, in the terms of his time, a Southern liberal. He believed that his land, the South, was in critical respects benighted and that the knowledge and techniques of social science could be employed to illuminate some of that darkness. This put him, in Southern terms, on the left, and made him, at least superficially, an American liberal. Yet one need only compare Vance's approach with the direction sociology has taken in recent decades to grasp the significance of the "Southern" in "Southern sociologist." For one thing, Vance always maintained an aristocratic aloofness, and his sense of discipline was a high, rigorous and demanding one. For another, his critique of the South was from the inside, which is why his essay "Is Agrarianism for Farmers?" is the most effective as well as the fairest of the many contemporary attacks on *I'll Take My Stand*. Vance was as much a Southern patriot in his own way as the Agrarians. It was, after all, his life's work (unsuccessful in the judgment of his editors) to establish a *regional* sociology.

Thus, given the perspective of time, the gulf between the Vanderbilt group and the Chapel Hill "liberals" appears narrower today than it seemed to them in the 1930's and 1940's—almost a *tactical* rather than a fundamental parting. (What is said for Vance in this regard goes equally for at least some other Southern liberals: his Chapel Hill colleagues Howard W. Odum, another sociologist, and W. T. Couch, a publisher, for example.) Alas, Southern progressives fit almost as poorly into the national dialectic as Southern conservatives.

It is well known that Southern writers can write. Less well known is that Southern historians can write. Not known at all, but true, is that Southern *sociologists* can write. Vance's thought was always in focus and his prose always lucid. He could explicate methodological problems, statistical findings, or philosophical points with equal clarity and ease. He was no piker as an old-fashioned social commentator either, as one can see by perusing his two satirical pieces on late

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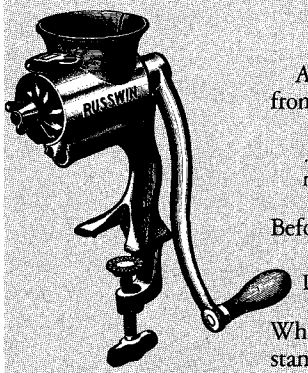
19th-century Southern politics, "Tennessee's War of the Roses" (about the feuding Taylor brothers) and "A Karl Marx for Hillbillies" (about Arkansas's Rabelaisian Governor, Jeff Davis). Vance was not alone. Humanistic sociologists are a Southern tradition. That was true of Vance's colleague Odum and it is true of his successor at Chapel Hill, John Shelton Reed, co-editor of the Vance essays and one of the contributors to *A Band of Prophets.*

A Band of Prophets is a collection of some of the papers given by the cream of Southern scholarship at a conference held at Vanderbilt University in observance of the 50th anniversary of *I'll Take My Stand.* There is some irony in Vanderbilt's sponsorship of this respectful celebration. The university and the Nashville business community, until quite recently, were anxious to be modern and progressive and were deeply embarrassed by the only two things they had that were of interest to the outside world—"country" music and the Agrarian writers. Both prejudices have been overcome, but one fears for the wrong reasons. Despite the irony, these papers are the most significant commentary to appear yet on the Agrarian work; they are, themselves, important contributions to the still-to-be-written history of the life of the mind in the South. Reed's paper is concerned with the degree to which the Agrarian statement and movement adumbrated a Southern nationalism analogous to European movements. It is the most original and groundbreaking of the essays, although they are all richly varied and worthy of attention. Charles P. Roland describes admirably the Southern historical background of the 1920's out of which *I'll Take My Stand* emerged. Lewis P. Simpson considers the Agrarian cast against the intellectual history of Western man and concludes that they were a part of the Republic of Letters engaged in artistic revolt against modernity and its solvents. George Core presents an astute history of the New Criticism and its relation to the Agrarian movement. Robert B. Heilman gives a Northerner's carefully considered appreciation of the prophetic power of the work. Louis D. Rubin celebrates the success of *I'll Take My Stand* as a piece of literature, as a poetic work in the tradition of Christian humanism. The least satisfying part of *A Band of Prophets* is the transcribed discussion between the three living Agrarians: Lyle H. Lanier, Robert Penn Warren, and Andrew Lytle. Disappointing is a relative term here, since the discussion was skillfully led by Cleanth Brooks, certainly one of America's most inspired scholars. (Brooks, indeed, should be awarded the title Thirteenth Southerner. He was just too young by a hair to be in *I'll Take My Stand.*) As the editors of *A Band of Prophets* point out, the surviving Agrarians have maintained a remarkable stability of viewpoint; their discussion takes up almost as if *I'll Take My Stand* was a conversation left off yesterday.

But perhaps that is what I find disappointing. Lanier and Warren have long been cut off from the day-to-day life of the South. Only Lytle is still rooted there. One gets the sense that the former two are fighting yesterday's rather than today's battles. Warren's preoccupation with Nixon leads him at times very near the banality of any conventional Northeastern university professor. (As if a politician lying were something new, or of very high priority for a social commentator in a country where millions of people's incomes are disappearing before their eyes, where nearly half the families are broken, and where as many as 150,000 children were kidnapped, raped, enslaved, and murdered in one year.) Lanier, quite rightly, is still concerned about preserving a humane scale against gigantism in business and finance and about protecting the natural world against destruction and pollution. That is all well and good, and the continuity is consoling, but these threats to the humane order do not loom quite so large, proportionately, as they once did. I would argue that the plain people of the South and perhaps of America have succeeded to a remarkable degree in humanizing the city and the factory—not completely but to a remarkable degree. The problem of economic and political gigantism is secondary, a problem solvable given sufficient will and intelligence. Our pressing crisis is not industrial pollution but cultural pollution (though, of course, the two are related, which was a large part of the burden of the Agrarian message). What threatens us most is not the unintended disruption fostered by urban-industrial life but the intentional destruction wrought by morally and intellectually corrupt policies—the deliberate discouragement of religion, family, community, and tradition.

That is why I find Lytle's comments the most rewarding. He still has the old fire, still keeps the original enemy in view, but seems to realize that the enemy may wear more than one face. Lytle is



Passions in America

According to press information, one Ms. Jeanette Minnis from Illinois:

> . . . was sentenced Wednesday to 25 years in prison for murdering and dismembering her husband last fall.

Before being sentenced, Ms. Minnis said, on the record:

> I miss my husband very dearly.

Which part? Or perhaps reassembled? Under the circumstances, this seems in need of more specifics. □

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concerned with the peril posed by the progressive Western loss of the sense of the sacred, of place, of craftsmanship, of family, of political genius. His remarks, archaic and anecdotal in style (they were referred to playfully by Brooks as "Rutherford County metaphysics"), are still as relevant as eternity. □

The Insecurities & Envies of the Liberal Mind

David Lodge: *Souls and Bodies;* William Morrow; New York.

Joan Williams: *County Woman;* Atlantic/Little, Brown; Boston.

by Gregory Wolfe

The novel which sets a story against a backdrop of turbulent social upheaval—civil or foreign wars, revolution—has wide appeal. At the lower end of the literary scale are the thick paperbacks on the supermarket swivel-racks; their covers feature such depictions as a plantation owner in a torrid embrace with a half-naked slave woman, with the burning plantation in the background. The social unrest in these novels is used primarily to echo and intensify unrestrained lust—which is what they are all about, anyway. On the highest end of the scale are works like Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace.* What transforms these tales into literature is the complex interplay between character and destiny, between the range of human choice and the larger social movement. However, the danger of the historical novel is a tendency toward ideological reductionism; it easily becomes a morality play promoting the author's particular ideological viewpoint; something which has been all too common in an age ravaged by "isms." Both of these novels, in differing degrees, fall into this trap.

A review of Malcolm Muggeridge's diaries written by Lodge may shed some light on his way of thinking. In it, Lodge says that the "recycling" of Muggeridge has reached its limit, and that Muggeridge "had the courage, or arrogance, to assume that his life has representative significance." Very soon it becomes obvious that Lodge thinks it arrogance; after comparing Muggeridge's spiritual pilgrimage with those of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, Lodge claims that because Muggeridge was not an artist like them, he turned to journalism and self-promotion. Such a view of Muggeridge, which ignores his talent as a writer and the depth of his religious insight, bespeaks a mind unlikely to see through the pretensions of secular liberalism. Lodge's tone is confident, even judicious. He can certainly afford to be so confident: at a very young age he has written some of the most popular comic novels and books of literary criticism (in Britain, at least) of the last 15 years. Some reviewers compare Lodge *favorably* to Greene and Waugh. In *Souls and Bodies,* Lodge turns his self-confident tone to good advantage, for his persona as narrator is very much the Fielding-esque scholar-gentleman, interrupting the story to make short disquisitions, commenting sympathetically on his characters, even sharing his thought processes as he decides what to name his characters. This self-conscious artistry encourages the reader to assume an ironic detachment and at the same time points to Lodge's artistic mastery, his ability to make the story come alive. Another device he employs is to use the transcript of a TV documentary (on a liberal Catholic organization) to end the novel on a note of comic irony.

The epigraph for *Souls and Bodies* is, significantly, from Hans Küng; it is a series of what might be called "fundamental" questions ("What can we know? . . . Why are we here? . . . What will give us courage for life and what courage for death?"). It turns out that these questions are important because they deal with the universal problems that Christianity seeks to answer and that stand in contradistinction to the accumulation of dogma and moral casuistry which burden modern Roman Catholics and cause them serious difficulties in life. For the most part, Lodge's criticism along these lines is light and comic: life for Roman Catholics is seen as a game of moral Snakes and Ladders, where the object is to avoid Hell by arranging one's moral status (by means of confession, communion, rosaries, indulgences) so as to die in a state of grace and thus go straight to Heaven. The main question for Catholics who seek pleasure while being confronted with moral prohibitions is: How far can one go? Lodge has great fun with this casuistry as he traces the premarital and early married lives of his characters, and the humor often lapses into farce.

But Lodge lets us know that this is not merely a comic novel like his *Changing Places,* a bouncy satire on the campus unrest of the late 60's and on English and American academic life. In *Souls and Bodies* there is a tragic element that is supposed to give bite to the satire; reviewers call this a "dark power" and even "stark tragedy." What it comes down to is this: Catholic sexual morality in general, and, more specifically, the doctrines on contraception embodied in the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* are seen as having destructive effects, in both a practical and a psychological sense. The great obstacle is the safe method of contraception (otherwise known as rhythm, or the sympto-thermal method in its developed form), which is often ineffective, sexually restricting, and just plain tiresome. In fact, the closest this novel comes to "stark tragedy" is when one

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child is born with Down's syndrome, and this is seen as a result of the safe method, which often causes conception late in a woman's menstrual cycle, when the chromosomes in the egg are weak and liable to cause congenital birth defects. Whether this presentation is true is a question for medical science, but it's worth noting that Lodge makes the case. Lodge continues his digression on the theology of contraception and *Humanae Vitae* in what seems a central passage:

> It is as difficult to enter into the mind of a Pope as it must be for a Pope to enter into the mind of, say, a young mother of three, in a double bed, who feels her husband's caressing touch and is divided between the desire to turn to him and the fear of an unwanted pregnancy.

Now I am not a Roman Catholic, not bound to defend *Humanae Vitae* (though I happen to agree with it), but apart from the assertions about contraception, there is a spiritual position taken here, probably part of what reviewer Bernard Levin called this book's "very remarkable moral stance." This "stance" is, simply, the denial of holiness, that measure of God's infinite goodness as opposed to man's sinfulness, which is the province of the Church. Lodge treats the matter emotionally and sympathetically, and some non-Catholics may be inclined to agree with him; I would contend, though, that this formulation asserts that the will to pleasure takes precedence over the claims of holiness. Lodge labors to make the Catholic position on contraception look useless and anachronistic, a harmful accretion of outmoded ideas, but it is precisely at the intersection of moral claims that serious thought is required. The liberal backs away and says that if something is done in *love,* then all is well—thus inserting a wedge between himself and reality.

For all the arresting satire in the latter half of *Souls and Bodies*—whose target is the liberal group formed by the characters and called "Catholics for an Open Church"—the "remarkable moral stance" at the heart of modernism so frequently exposed by Malcolm Muggeridge remains the central thesis of the novel. When one finishes a novel by Waugh, he emerges feeling bruised. This feeling of having been battered stems from the unyielding moral and spiritual truths held by Waugh which provide the basis of his irony and humor. In *A Handful of Dust,* for example, though marriage is not idealized, the spiritually decadent denial of marriage is the source of ironic calamities. Because David Lodge's moral stance is essentially secular, his novel does not possess a tragic dimension, and though it is often quite amusing, it leaves one with the feeling that something is sadly missing: there is a certain emptiness below the laughs. Likening Lodge to Waugh and Greene simply doesn't wash.

There are times when the dust-jacket blurb, written by publishing company editors with their eyes on trade statistics rather than literary merit, does regrettable injustice to a book. This is partially true of *County Woman.* Describing the novel's heroine, the blurb reads:

> Allie McCall, fifty and white, is open to all the new ideas about class, race,

> and domestic roles that accompany the integrationist tide. A house wife who has lived all her life in [a] small farming community . . . Allie finds middle age and her "traditional" marriage stagnant, and seizes the tumultuous times as an opportunity for personal renewal.

This accurately describes half of the novel, for *County Woman* is really two novels in one. First, there is the liberal/feminist morality play, which the blurb describes and which apparently sells copies. Second, there is a well-told subplot that involves crime and corruption in a rural Southern community, which reveals an imaginative ability to portray a lower-class and insular culture and the moral life of simple people. This "second" novel begins to emerge in the middle of the book when Miss Williams leaves her heroine to develop the subplot, but, just as the story starts to struggle into life, it is squashed by the heroine's quest and settles back into something like a made-for-TV movie.

There is an almost complete identification between the author and her heroine; one searches in vain for any sign of ironic undercutting of Allie McCall. In both the description of Allie's thinking and in the narration the bedraggled clichés of liberalism and feminism are heaped upon each other until the whole mess threatens to come crashing down.

> All her life she had fought against a feeling of nothingness, and in middle age she had the terrible fear that she was losing that battle. . . . She had never been content with the idea that one lived for each day. . . . She wanted to accomplish something, she wanted something of her own. . . . Poppa, though, had a mean streak like most men. . . . Men went on being boys. . . . Grown-ups in those days had little thought for the feelings of children . . . they didn't think of children as people.

And on and on and on.

Allie McCall's husband, Tate, is shy and weak; he has never asserted himself publicly; even his choice of farming after the war is seen as a shirking of manly initiative. Allie's father is a mean-spirited invalid who watches TV all day and thinks that President Kennedy and the

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integrationists are communists. Both Tate and Poppa see Allie's place as in the kitchen, and they react with irritation when she speaks her mind. The only enlightened men are a sheriff and a district attorney from other counties, and a black man who was falsely accused of killing Allie's mother. The black man is one of the few healthy people about, and he comes to function as an oracle: in his resigned and ironic way he utters devastating criticisms of the South and of America as a whole.

It is difficult to reconcile the sensitivity of Joan Williams with the crudeness of her morality play. The liberal imagination deals in abstractions and prejudices, but it cannot conceive of things concretely in their full, complex reality. Allie is the Oppressed Woman searching for "meaning"; the men are obscurantist and effeminate; the abused black man is the only one capable of social perspective. He is imprisoned but escapes, and Allie visits him, a priori thinks him innocent, and goes on a quest to clear his name, during which time she runs for constable. In this traditionally male position she achieves and finds her "meaning," though it spells the end of her marriage.

In addition to the textbook neatness of the allegory, there is an unmistakable vulgarity to Allie's liberal/feminist consciousness. Near the end of the novel, Tate defends some enlightened decisions he has made in farming, and he deprecates the aspiring middle-class types in the town nearby who scrimp and save in order to join the country club. This is Allie's reaction:

> She looked at his familiar face, wondering why, once he made two good decisions in farming, he could not have made others—gone on ahead. . . . Unable to help that thought, the important thing was not to say it. She'd like to belong to that little country club, too.

To the liberal mind, meaning can be found only by the assertion of self. But for all the talk about helping the poor, minorities, and women, there is insecurity and envy in the liberal mind—a secret desire to join the country club, an obsession with image. □

The Nobel Prize Donahue

Heinrich Böll: *The Safety Net;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Paul Horgan: *Mexico Bay;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Betsy Clarke

Liberal newspaper owner Fritz Tolm has just been elected president of the Association, a conglomerate of influential business types in Germany. His daughter Sabine, former girl friend of a terrorist, is now five months pregnant with the child of her security guard who lets shoplifters go because they are "victims of seduction." Sabine is married to a greedy capitalist who travels a lot. Fritz's son Herbert, a current comrade of terrorists, frets about the system and the poison in fast food. Other son Rolf, a convicted car arsonist and rock thrower, has given both of his sons the name Holger, in honor of "one of the hardest of the hard-core terrorists" who died in prison on a hunger strike. Rolf, a crackerjack banker, dreams of the free life in Cuba. Hang on. Because of Fritz's new position, security guards are everywhere protecting the Tolm family from Sabine's old flame Heinrich Beverloh and Rolf's first wife, Veronica, who at this moment might be planning ingenious assassinations with who knows how much inside assistance. After all, two other newspapermen were attacked by such innocuous household goodies as exploding cakes and cigarettes. Could Fritz's servant be a traitor? Though wife Kathe is as pale as the day of Rolf's arrest, Fritz remains calm, even philosophical. "What surprises you most about this strange world?" Fritz asks his servant, who replies, "What surprises me most is the patience of the poor."

What is this? Is Heinrich Böll's new novel a broad satire on the liberal establishment's overbearing tolerance, or is it simply daytime drama at its most entertaining? Despite the evidence, the answer seems to be, oddly, neither, for other elements of the novel suggest that Böll is playing it straight. *The Safety Net* is in fact an offensive, dishonest work that is at the same time so moronic that, were it not for the perfect grammar, it could have been penned by Phil Donahue.

Though Böll claims to split his time between Cologne and the Eifel Mountains, he nevertheless shows signs of having come under the influence of Dan Rather and *The CBS Evening News.* Those multiple references to "Communist warmth" are not to be taken ironically: all of his leftists have hearts of gold. The two assassination attempts are described as remote events, played down even more by their nature. Exploding cakes and cigarette packages are, after all, standard fare in Jerry Lewis movies, and no one has ever seemed the worse for it. So inept are these terrorists, in fact, and so obtuse are the Tolms, that a reader can experience only resentment upon the realization that the dreaded executions will never occur. But terrorists are not society's only problem. Don't forget nuclear power and the rape of the land. Industry, in cahoots with the unions, has destroyed whole villages to get the coal below. Tolm's married homosexual friend Kortschede kills himself, leaving Fritz a note with "some grim prophecies —about the environment, nuclear energy and growth and banks and industry." That's as specific as Böll is willing to get, so the rest of us are left to ponder the ecological ramifications of committing suicide with a gas-guzzling auto.

Miss Clarke is a free-lance writer.

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Naturally, the system is to blame. "The system was the Nothing, the 'established Nothingness' on whose garbage one could live, had to live," acknowledges Fritz. The poverty of his youth made him long for the riches he now enjoys, but at least he has the decency to feel guilty about his success. Sabine's wealthy in-laws worry only about increasing their wealth and staving off some bogus communist threat. "They're forever conjuring up the Red peril, they're pathological about it and pathologically boring, they see starvation staring them in the face when sales rise by only twenty-nine million instead of thirty-five million, they defend the middle class, to which they don't belong, against the Socialist threat while knowing perfectly well that their very concentration represents the greatest threat to the middle class," Kathe asserts. So there. If only capitalists weren't so greedy, the people of the world would live in peace. Don't look to religion for the answer: the priests are all sleeping with their girl friends while preaching chastity to the congregation. In fact, all of the radicals have come out of the church. The army is no solution, for that's where the terrorists learned their skills with explosives. No, compared to the minions of the system, the radicals of the left are angelic; it seems as though everything they touch turns to gold. Thanks to them, Sabine found true love with her married security guard. Sabine's friend has been similarly blessed as a result of death threats aimed at others. "I daren't say it aloud but, you know, we can thank those maniacs for it, those crazy criminals," she says.

Böll's philosophy is ridiculous, but his dialogue is enough to provoke anyone to violence. Says Fritz to his wife:

'You know I have always loved you. And there's something else you must know.'
'Yes, what is it?'
'That some form of socialism must come, must prevail . . .'

"There is a moral and aesthetic integrity to his work."
—(London) Times Literary Supplement

"Böll is a good man, a servant of values who deserves our respect."
—New York Times Book Review

Mercifully, this inane novel will do nothing to further the cause.

Mexico Bay, the new novel by Pulitzer Prize-winner Paul Horgan, could not be more different from the standard ideological novels of the last few years. A reader will search in vain for references to capitalist pigs or American imperialism. Horgan, a historian as well as a novelist, has set his story around the time of World War II, when patriotism was strong. Many of his characters temporarily sacrifice prosperous careers to lend their services to the United States government. A few lose their lives. Though the plot is rife with the old conventions (beautiful brilliant woman finds happiness with a perfect man on her third try), it has been so long since most of us have read a novel like this that its once-standard fare seems positively refreshing. Diana Macdonald, only child of a well-to-do newspaperman, marries successful playwright John Wentworth and lives a glamorous life during the war years in Washington, D.C. The marriage occurs against the wishes of Diana's father, for Wentworth is a generation older than she and of questionable sexual inclination. The marriage is childless and unhappy since, in addition to his self-absorption, Wentworth likes to manipulate the people in his life in the same way he manipulates the characters of his comedies. When applied to reality, his modus operandi backfires, however, and Diana runs off with Ben Ives, a scruffy young painter of promise whom Wentworth has befriended with just this scenario in mind. "In scheming their lives, what had he done to his own?" Wentworth wonders, surprisingly pained.

Diana's life with Ives is the antithesis of her past. A precursor to the hippies 20 years later, Ives believes in doing what comes naturally among natural things. Therefore he and Diana head for Texas, where they live hand-to-mouth on her earnings from selling refreshments to tourists. Ives, meanwhile, travels freely in search of ideas for his paintings. Though pleasant enough when sober, he is a mean drunk who kills a man in a restaurant over a harebrained woman and escapes by sea to certain death during a storm.

In the background of these events is Howard Debler, upon whom Horgan has bestowed intellect, loyalty, integrity, courage, and drive. Debler, who has kept his feelings for Diana to himself, not only rescues her from the pain, humiliation, and loneliness she feels after Ives's crime, but gives her happiness in Roman Catholicism, marriage, pregnancy, an upper-class style of life, and the reflected glory of a husband's spectacular career. All of this supposedly happened 35 years ago. Nevertheless, a feminist reader of modern literature will have difficulty suppressing a sneer. Doesn't Horgan know that marriage, pregnancy, and the Roman Catholic Church are the enemies of women and always were? Diana Debler, with her brains and beauty, should have been the first Mary Cunningham. What a waste.

In truth, though Horgan uses the English language beautifully, he does not endow his characters with the depth and psychological complexity that would match his linguistic acumen. Diana is a particular problem. Wentworth wants to write his plays, Debler wants to write his histories, Ives wants to paint. All three want a beautiful woman. What does Diana want? Here, after all, is a woman of ability who effortlessly and automatically loves three very different men in a rather short span of time. What is it about her nature that gives her this

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automatic, potentially self-destructive inclination? This question remains unanswered. Landscapes and natural beauty are brilliantly depicted, but actually all of the characters needed more fully articulated natures, particularly with regard to motivation. It's one thing to find and put into words the pulchritude of mountains and skies, quite another to find the sense of a human being. Only the latter, however, determines serious literature. □

Politics / Sociology / Ideology

Seymour Martin Lipset: *Political Man* (expanded edition); The Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore.

by William C. Havard

Over the past 30 years Seymour Martin Lipset has enjoyed a *succes d'estime* that is rare for an academician in the social sciences. He is one of that close-knit band of sociologists who were precocious undergraduates at City College in the decade roughly spanning World War II, took advanced degrees at prestigious American universities (Columbia in Lipset's case), and then proceeded to populate the growing faculties of the major departments of sociology, especially in the Northeast and on the West Coast. As in so many forms of American enterprise, overcapitalization and high-powered marketing techniques not only produced a post-World War II boom in sociology, but even led to claims on the part of some of its entrepreneurs to have reduced the other social sciences to the status of subsidiaries. In the late 1940's, for example, I heard Talcott Parsons deliver a series of lectures in London on the current state of the social sciences, and while I do not recall much of the content (Parsons was even more difficult to follow aurally than in print), the gist of the argument was that economics and political science were in static intellectual conditions from which they could recover only through strong infusions of sociological concepts and methods. At Harvard and a few other places, either as snobbish gestures to modesty or in an attempt to throw a veil of respectability over a cacophonous parvenu among learned disciplines, sociology was kept partly disguised behind such euphemisms as "Social Relations."

Regardless of the label under which it is packaged, sociology is a product for which the demand has expanded geometrically in the period since World War II, ostensibly because of its utility as the foundation for university "training" in the newly integrated (as of the 1950's) "behavioral sciences," and latterly for its possible applied value in solving problems of public policy.

Lipset's place as a high-ranking executive in the social-science corporate structure has been recognized and secured by the universities in which he has taught (Toronto, Columbia, Berkeley, Harvard, and Stanford), by his election to memberships in both the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and by having been the recipient of at least three major awards for scholarship. He has been elected to numerous offices in professional associations and is currently the president of the American Political Science Association. Lipset once held a joint appointment in social relations and government at Harvard and is now professor of sociology and political science at Stanford.

Political Man, first published in 1960, is Lipset's most celebrated book. And measured by the figures in the publisher's blurb on the back cover of this new edition—translation into 15 languages, with worldwide sales of more than 250,000 copies—it must also be one of the most successful books in the social-science genre (best-selling textbooks aside) to appear in the current era of the behavioral sciences. Given what sociologists might refer to as such positive indicators of influence, and considering with what deference *Political Man* has been treated in the "literature," it is not surprising that the author should have made so few substantial alterations of content, method, and interpretation in preparing a second edition of a book that had gone unrevised for a generation. Neither social history nor sociology per se has ordinarily displayed so much stability.

True, the revision has increased the total bulk of the volume by the addition of two long chapters totaling over 100 pages. But these chapters, devoted to "Second Thoughts and Recent Findings" and a review of "the end of ideology" thesis, do little more than confirm —or reconfirm—the principal conclusions of the 1960 edition. After all, why should one rebuild a monument before which so many have yielded so much homage when a little refurbishing will do?

Although not directly touted as such, *Political Man* is a synthesis of what has happened to political sociology at the hands of those who might be regarded as successors to the "four great Europeans whose ideas are, more or less, the basis of political sociology: Marx, Tocqueville, Weber and Michels." Marx and Tocqueville, according to Lipset, were concerned mainly with class conflict and consensus, while Weber and Michels were fixed on the relation between bureaucracy and democracy as the critical determinants in the social configurations of modern politics. Lipset and, by inference, most of his colleagues who followed in the wake of these path-breakers have also been concerned with the conditions of social and political stability—the effort to explain the relation between the requirement of some (determinable?) degree of consensus and the way in which conflict may be constructively channeled in the effort to reconcile interests—and the *social* condi-

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tions necessary for the practice of a democratic politics within the context of a diverse social structure.

Lipset is no Marxist. His preference is for a pluralistic democratic order grounded in interest-group liberalism, with a tolerance for a policy orientation ranging between the nonextreme poles of individualism and moderate collectivism. He wants to find what might be called a Tocquevillean way of channeling the disparate interests of a pluralist society (made up of a plethora of private and public associations) into a tacit consensus on working political arrangements that can satisfy enough of the demands of these various groups to constrain conflict within the limits of peaceful competition. At the same time, he wants a Weberian resolution of the threat of centralized bureaucratic domination of both socioeconomic and governmental institutions. He seems to think that the functional advantages of a rational bureaucratic mode of administration can be obtained without relinquishing control over the expert by the "public" that the bureaucracy is supposed to serve.

Democracy is the means of solving these problems. But democracy is dependent on certain social and psychological conditions—the most important of which are economic development and widespread acceptance of governmental legitimacy. Without going into detail or providing illustrations, one can say that the fulsome correlational analyses displayed by Lipset (or more often, incorporated by reference) in *Political Man* all point to the necessity of adhering closely to the characteristics usually ascribed to "modernity"—if the teleocratic end of economic development, leading to stabilized liberal democracy, is to be realized. Modernization connotes secularization, urbanization, industrialization, expanded educational opportunity, and increased physical and social mobility. These conditions offer possibilities for decreasing the great economic gap between the privileged and the almost totally deprived in traditional societies, thus reducing the polarization of social classes that produces political extremes, instability, coercive regimes, and revolution. In addition, economic development facilitates a broad extension of political participation, not just by way of moving toward universal suffrage, but also through the organization of new mediating groups (e.g., political parties and trade unions) that afford additional opportunities for popular participation through their own processes of internal democratization. Since Lipset seems to associate ideology (in a rather elusive definitional way) with absolute moral and religious values that imperil functional consensus on basic issues of social cohesion and governmental legitimacy, "the end of ideology" is simply a correlative of the extension of the conditions that combine to produce modern liberal democracy. And, as Lipset's comparative correlational analysis presumes to demonstrate, universally valid social-scientific propositions emerge about the possibilities that the "functional rationalism" of modernity will, over time, displace the "substantive" rationality of traditionalism, with its ideological offshoots that stand in the way of economic development and a concomitant growth in individual and group political participation to the point of full-scale democratization and political stability on a global scale.

If I were a sociologist, I, too, would prefer to identify with Tocqueville's concept of pluralistic social accommodation and Weber's notion of democratic controls over bureaucracy rather than with Marx's revolutionary means of resolving class conflict and Michels's iron law of oligarchy as means of attaining the social conditions required for functional political consensus and legitimation of regime. For better or worse, however, I escaped that vocational fate as a result of exposure to instruction in philosophy that prevented a permanent lapse into the positivist reductionism that furnishes whatever rational underpinning "modern" sociology (as contrasted with the older tradition of social philosophy) can lay claim to.

In this respect sociology is a thoroughly "modern" subject whose intellectual forefathers are Comte and Marx. The less-than-coherent legacy left by this pair maintains its currency in the hands of their successors. And so it is with *Political Man*. Despite Lipset's relatively modest direct claims about the definitiveness of sociological knowledge and the extent of the social transformation made possible through application of that knowledge to political action, the old Comtian and Marxian confidence in the methods of natural science and technology as keys to understanding and shaping the course of history still shows through, as does the vague faith in progress toward a secular eschaton that is essentially materialist. Little note is taken of the needs of man beyond the satisfaction of physical ones, other than some indirect references to them as abstract absolutes productive of those social, moral, or religious ideologies that obstruct the functionally rational course of economic and political development leading to the end of ideology in the postindustrial society.

Even when, toward the conclusion of the last (new) chapter, "A Concept and its History: The End of Ideology," a different kind of sociologist, Edward Shils, is quoted as indicated below, the reader cannot be at all sure that Lipset grasps the extent to which Shils's summary philosophical statement vitiates so much of both the purported sociological truth and the program of social action broadly set forth in *Political Man:*

> It is obvious that no society can exist without a cognitive, moral, and expressive culture. Standards of truth, beauty, goodness are inherent in the structure of human action. The culture which is generated from cognitive, moral, and expressive needs and which is transmitted and sustained by tradition is part of the very constitution of society. Thus every society, having a culture, will have a complex set of orientations toward man, society, and the universe in which ethical and metaphysical propositions, aes-

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thetic judgments, and scientific knowledge will be present. These will form the outlooks and suboutlooks of the society. Thus there can never be an 'end' of outlooks or suboutlooks. The contention arose from the failure to distinguish these and ideology in the sense here understood. [From Shils's article on "Ideology" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968).]

In brief, political man is no simple integer in a social equation. In politics, as in life generally, man is, as Eric Voegelin puts it, a *participant* in the structure of being of which he is a part. □

Clever Writing

John Cheever: *Oh What a Paradise It Seems;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

George Steiner: *The Portage to San Cristóbal of A.H.;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Linda Thorne

A few years ago I received a copy of John Cheever's *Falconer* as a gift. Today, I can remember little of the book except that its cover was bright blue, with type in silver and white; of the writing itself I remember only three recurring words: Falconer, Farragut, fratricide. I loaned the book to one of my English professors who returned it to me with a succinct note attached: "It's a good American novel, not a *great* American novel." Of *Oh What a Paradise It Seems,* Cheever's latest and last novel, I suspect he might simply have said, "It is *an* American novel." Beyond that, it is a *contemporary* American novel which manages to cover, in the short space of 100 pages, a broad range of topics one might just as easily read about in most morning newspapers: the alienation of the elderly; sex without love, both hetero- and homosexual; murder; organized crime; unscrupulous psychiatrists; group therapy; pollution; a population seeking God, a god, an icon, nirvana, individual Eden.

But oh how embroidered with literary artifice it is.

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Lemuel Sears shares his Christian name with a famous traveler of a former age who, like Sears, journeys and seeks someone of his own kind. The actual tale of his quest begins with a line from William Butler Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium": "An aged man is but a paltry thing." But just as appropriate for Sears's lot is the poem's first line: "That is no country for old men"—and particularly not for old men who live in an age when youth seems to be the ideal. For Lemuel Sears's wanderings hardly take him to the "holy city of Byzantium." Those he encounters along the way are, like himself, travelers in search of that magical and individually defined "something."

Sears's female love interest is an independent female who regularly attends "self-help" meetings—to stop eating, drinking, or smoking, Sears knows not which—and frequently tells him: "You don't understand the first thing about women." We don't understand the first thing about her, whose exit from Sears's life is as abrupt as her entrance into it, nor, most likely, are we meant to. Rejected, Sears forms a brief homosexual liaison with an elevator operator. We know little more of his life and motivations than we did of hers: he's married, has two sons, and will take his wife to Key West after having spent the first days of his vacation with Sears, flycasting for fish in Beasley's Pond, which hasn't supported life in ten years. Then there is the self-serving analyst in whose hands Sears places himself, seeking help to allay his fears of having to declare himself a homosexual. A repressed homosexual himself, the analyst interprets Sears's quite normal statements to be evidence of neurosis and, almost in the same breath, asks Sears to refer more patients to him. In much the same way as rubbish pollutes Beasley's Pond, which comes to symbolize Sears's longing for love and a return to innocence, these people pollute Sears's life. And so the tale unwinds, cataloguing the clichés of modern existence. In the end, the pond is restored to its pristine state, Sears's life is returned to equanimity, and if his outer and inner landscapes, even taken together, don't quite equal the holy city of Byzantium, they are reasonably close facsimiles.

And, of course, we wouldn't have expected it to end any other way. Therein lies another of the book's faults: for all of the unpredictability of its characters, it is quite predictable in its resolution. Granted, one could ascribe that to the irony operating throughout, the first clue being the use of "seems" in the title. Other ironies abound: Sears, the computer-company executive who depletes the Carpathians of mineral deposits to advance technology yet decries the pollution of a rural pond; the psychiatrist who seeks his patient's help; the seemingly contented family man who engages in homosexual activities. The book's tone is, for the most part, tongue-in-cheek. And nothing is quite as it seems. John Cheever was clearly a clever man. His last work is a decent book, a well-written book, a sometimes-entertaining book, but certainly not a great book. It tries, to quote T. S. Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock misquoting Andrew Marvell, "to have squeezed the universe into a ball." It ends up with a blob.

"This is perfect Cheever; it is perfect, period."

—John Leonard
New York Times Book Review

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A far richer and more thought-provoking work is George Steiner's *The Portage to San Cristóbal of A.H.*, which brings to mind an image from another of Yeats's poems, "The Second Coming": "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last/Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" The "rough beast" in Steiner's novel is a 90-year-old Adolf Hitler, found in the jungles of the Amazon by a group of Israelis whose goal is to bring him not to Bethlehem to be born but to Jerusalem to be tried and put to death. It is an intriguing, complex work about the power of language to bring man to his salvation or damnation, about how good can become inseparable from evil, about how forgetting can renew, and how memory can destroy. *Discordia concors.* In everything its opposite.

The interior of the jungle through which the Israelis carry Hitler is primitive, uncivilized, at once compared to Hades and Eden. Various tribes of Indians chart the Israelis' path and progress, each conveying the information to the tribe further on. The nazi-hunters are oblivious to this surveillance and also to the fact that their progress is being monitored by intelligence officers in the major capitals of the world. Juxtaposed to their journey through the interior of the Amazonian jungle is the exterior world and its more sophisticated, more ambiguous communication system based on the word. Each of the players manipulates words in his own way and to advance his own cause. A British academician is best known as the author of a book which "proves" that Hitler died in 1945. A Russian pathologist who had examined Hitler's corpse and testified that it was not the Führer's, then retracted his testimony under pressure, is summoned decades later to restate his original thesis. And restate it he does. A French intelligence officer presents his perceptions through his diary entries; a German legal scholar pores over documents to ascertain Germany's rights in the event of Hitler's recapture; the U.S. Secretary of State parleys with reporters in the politico's "doublespeak" during a press conference. A C.I.A. operative posing as an entrepreneur ready to cash in on the find comes to Orosso armed with contracts granting himself sole and exclusive rights to the story. His prospective partner has monitored the Israelis' progress via radio, has several falsified passports that indicate no national loyalties, and seems less interested in money than in the possibility of international wheeling and dealing.

One of the book's most masterful controllers of the language is Emmanuel Lieber, who directs the search operation from a small office in Tel Aviv and for whom the memory of the Holocaust has never lost its original vividness. Without Lieber's powers of persuasion and the sound of his "voice, more binding than the swamp," the Israelis might have forsaken their search long before—or, more likely, might not have begun it at all. The book's most powerful chapter is the one in which Lieber speaks, cataloguing the crimes of the nazis, atrocity by atrocity, telling just enough of each so that the reader completes the image in his mind's eye. Yet Lieber is presented not so much as a contrast to Hitler as a complement: "There was only one thing left of him: his waiting. That was his soul and nerve and bone. Just like this man. Waiting." Throughout the book, distinctions are blurred, phrases turned, expectations unfulfilled. The final chapter is a soliloquy delivered by the master word-manipulator himself, Adolf Hitler. To his Israeli captors, he declares that nazism was a "parody" of Zionism and that it was the Holocaust which gave them the "courage of injustice" to claim Israel as their own. He concludes:

> The *Reich* begat Israel. These are my last words. The last words of a dying man against the last words of those who suffered; and in the midst of incertitude must matters be left till the great revelation of all secrets.

Yet Hitler's words are not the last in the book, nor is there any end punctuation. The last image is auditory, the sound of helicopters hovering overhead, ready to destroy both A.H. and his Israeli captors. Silence will return to the jungle, and, in the exterior world, men will continue to manipulate words to their own advantage. Hitler's voice can be forgotten, as can the voices of those who sought to remind the uncaring world of his evil.

To say that Steiner's work is clever yet to praise it and to apply the same term to Cheever's novel pejoratively is not necessarily a contradiction. Cheever's cleverness is transparent, almost to the extent that *Paradise* seems to be novel-writing reduced to formula: a glitzy cover + $10.00 price tag + 100 pages + *x* voguish topics + *y* literary techniques = one best-seller. To call a work of art "clever," whether used as a criticism or commendation, speaks primarily of its intellectual and imaginative qualities. While one can admire Steiner's novel on those counts, especially for its subtlety, one wishes ultimately for a clearer moral stance on the issues it addresses. □

In the Mail

Concise Histories of American Popular Culture **edited by M. Thomas Inge; Greenwood Press; Westport, CT.** From Advertising to Women, this compilation of essays provides an examination of things that most take for granted, but which others consider very seriously.

Equal Protection and Personal Rights: The Regime of the "Discrete and Insular Minority" **by Edward J. Erler; The Claremont Institute; Claremont, CA.** This paper examines how the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment is interpreted by the Court and others who always seek "class" differences.

God's Words to His Church **by the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Noto, Italy; Ignatius Press; San Francisco, CA.** This study guide to the Church in the Bible was originally developed for use by missionaries in the Peruvian Andes, yet it has useful qualities for more sophisticated settings.

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COMMENDABLES

An American Tragedy

Eric N. Skousen: ***The Nuclear War;*** The Freeman Institute; Salt Lake City.

by Allan C. Carlson

There is a strong element of the tragic in Eric Skousen's tale of the rise and fall of the nuclear-power option in the United States. It might be loosely compared to the history of science in ancient China, where extraordinary technological innovations languished unappreciated until they were borrowed or stolen by a more dynamic civilization. Professor Skousen retells the fascinating detective story behind the discovery of the atom's secrets, capturing the sense of awesome achievement which accompanied humankind's tapping of this unlimited power source. He then describes the rise of the antinuke movement, a mixture of the nihilistic radical politics of the 1960's and the "Me Generation" irresponsibility of the 1970's. Primeval fears, inflamed rhetoric, and half-truths combined by 1975 into a potent political force. "The media crowded around [the 'antinukes'] for any small words of wisdom," Skousen explains. "Money began to flow in their direction. . . . In vain, the nuclear industry attempted a few feeble refutations, but it was too late. The public had been scared."

Now, in 1982, that industry is in shambles. No new plants have been ordered since 1980; 16 existing orders were canceled in that year alone. Cost overruns brought on by legal and regulatory delays have driven the price tag for plants already under construction to 10 times their initial estimates. The appalling stupidity in all this lies in the enormous energy resource which this nation has, by default, nearly forsworn. For instance, the 230,000 tons of U-238 nuclear waste now being stored in Federal facilities have a potential worth of over $20 *trillion* if the USA—like France and the Soviet Union—would commit itself to the breeder-reactor option. This fuel reserve alone could provide America with all its energy needs for several centuries. Proven, yet unmined, uranium and thorium reserves within U.S. boundaries could add still more *thousands* of years of assured power. Yet, as the nuclear option withers, both stored and unmined uranium becomes only so much worthless rock.

But what about safety? Skousen skillfully decimates the myths surrounding the "risks" of nuclear power. For example, plutonium, the atomic fuel used in a "breeder," is not "the most toxic substance known to man." When ingested, *it is* only 1/50th as toxic as arsenic, a common industrial chemical. Botulin toxin is one *billion* times more toxic than plutonium. In fact, an equivalent one-cup solution of plutonium is no more poisonous than the caffeine found in the 10 cups of coffee some bleary-eyed Americans drink every day.

This gracefully written little book is aimed at a college freshman audience. Professor Skousen hopes to reverse the disastrous course which our national energy debate has taken over the past decade. However, despite his efforts and the near-frantic attempts by Reagan appointees on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to streamline the plant-licensing process, the book may already be merely an exercise in futility. "The nuclear industry is so far gone," antinuke activist Richard Udell recently gloated before a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, "that nothing can revive it at this point." That is, indeed, an American tragedy. □

Dr. Carlson is editor of Persuasion At Work.

About the Pontiff

George Huntston Williams: ***The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action;*** Seabury Press; New York.

by Marek M. Michalski

The first Slavic pope and the only one in this century to be an academician, Karol Wojtyla, a man of remarkable scholarship, is now a world leader for the causes of spirituality, dignity, and human rights. Recently, the Seabury Press published a biographical and theological interpretation of his collected philosophical work.

Professor Williams, of the Harvard Divinity School, is himself a Protestant and a Church historian. He first met the current Pope in 1962 at Vatican II and has long been a close follower of Karol Wojtyla's works and career. Williams seems to have delved deeply into the specific factors of John Paul II's background—the complex tradition of the Polish Church, the philosophy of phenomenology, mysticism, and poetry, World War II and the communist aftermath, and, finally, contemporary Catholic scholarship. He appears to be familiar with the close bonds between the Church and nation, religious tolerance and the defense of liberties, cohabitation of ecumenical moves, Marian devotion, Polish messianism, and religion and nature. Just two years before he was elected as Pontiff, Cardinal Wojtyla authored a Lenten meditation entitled "Sign of Contradiction." About that Williams writes: "The great Polish mystic, metropolitan, and moralist is now, as Pontiff, himself a sign of contradiction—in his physical and intellectual prowess, his admirable self-possession and self-discipline in all circumstances, the liberality and even winsome unconventionality of his tactics, and his gentle severity in his administration of the See of St. Peter."

Williams suggests the relationship of the Pope's philosophical development with his theological conservatism. Wojtyla's "acting person" is a rational, responsible being who performs under the supposition of "free will, a normative ethic, an absolute truth and a good and bad moral value of every act." Wojtyla's studies of Max Scheler illustrate how the Pope utilized phenomenology and neo-Thomism to develop an original philosophical position of his own. Wojtyla maintains that faith develops through intellect while hope and love grow through will. He interrelates the inner and outer acts of a person with the responsible self, who is both subject and object and thus in a unique epistemological

Mr. Michalski holds an M.A. from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

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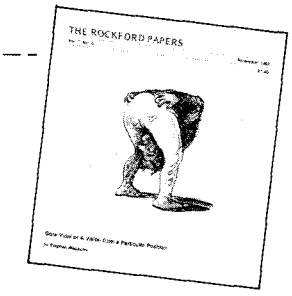

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position to get at the reality of "personhood." Wojtyla's views of ethics where the senses are involved differs clearly from Scheler, who gave primacy to feeling over will. To Williams, the system of marital ethics is notably conservative, and he calls this work a "manual for Catholics" and a "reasoned guide for all Christians."

Williams's grasp of the profundity of Polish Catholicism demonstrates his sense of the heritage and culture of Poland. Ultimately, *The Mind of John Paul II* is a practical book because it educates. It helps the reader to understand and to share the Pope's vision of Christian ecumenical life in our time.

Wodehousiana

David A. Jasen: *P. G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master;* Continuum; New York.
Benny Green: *P. G. Wodehouse: A Literary Biography;* The Rutledge Press; New York.
***The Uncollected Wodehouse;* Edited by David A. Jasen;** Continuum; New York.
***The Eighteen-carat Kid and Other Stories by P.G. Wodehouse;* Edited by David A. Jasen;** Continuum; New York.
P. G. Wodehouse and Herbert Westbrook: *Not George Washington;* Continuum; New York.

by Teresa Queen

Since the death of The Master in 1975 the fate of the Empress of Blandings has remained a mystery. Worse yet, the further predicaments of Bertie Wooster have not materialized, leaving Jeeves with nothing to do. For readers not yet born (or not yet reading) in the years 1900-1919, "new" Wodehouse exists in the form of one novel and two collections. Though Wodehouse as a species is extinct, these early examples provide a glimpse of the evolutionary process of a writer. Plum (as he was dubbed in childhood) avoids the traditional, progressive route and begins with a fully adapted creature.

The Uncollected Wodehouse is a gathering of the early ancestors of several favorite characters. *The Good Angel* allows a peek at Jeeves's cockney uncle, one Keggs. What Keggs lacks in polish he makes up in sound wisdom. His understanding of the human character, in this case female, far surpasses that of the average being. He observes: "You may have noticed, sir, that young ladies is often took by Tennyson, hespecially in the summer-time." Keggs's unerring judgment is passed on to his heir, Jeeves, whose only equal is Dorothy L. Sayers's Bunter.

Plum's ability to write with equal hilarity about certain levels of society rivals Sheridan's. His idiosyncratic penetration of the criminal mind is apparent, even at this early date. One short story contains a complete biography in two lines: "The profession of Mr. James (Spider) Buffin was pocket-picking. His hobby was revenge." An early but perfect example of concise use of space. This 1910 story, though the first of his crime stories, is in no way a minor effort. His trademark combination of lower-class dialogue with upper-crust narration is as polished here as in stories written 60 years later.

Contrary to popular critical belief, Wodehouse is a writer of extended range. He writes of cricket, boxing, public-school life, and Hollywood life in a style that has made these themes his. Romantic comedy is his customary genre, but he often strays profitably into other fields. His sole mystery is unfortunate only because he never wrote another.

Wodehouse mastered the mid-Atlantic technique early on in his career. His talent for mixing a proper British setting, members of the American criminal milieu and small British schoolboys and their masters in one cohesive story is unmatched in its abstract comicality. Plum wrote about both sides of the Atlantic from the perspective of his peculiar understanding. His comic arsenal was stocked with the most awesome exaggerations of basic human flaws which effortlessly turn into virtues. Men (and women) endlessly succumb to the formidable perils of decency, courtesy, innocence, and gallantry. The same events viewed by different people have little in common. Early in his career, Wodehouse exploited such discrepancy in a story told by very different narrators, providing the framework for a stock Wodehouse extravaganza.

Shortly after The Master's death, the connoisseurs and gourmets of his inimitable literary persona wondered if his demise meant the end of the *story*. The sheer volume of what keeps appearing by and about him should put these worries to rest. □

Miss Queen is a graduate of the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

An Affirmation of Life

Wallace Stegner: *One Way to Spell Man: Essays with a Western Bias;* Doubleday; New York.

by Robert C. Steensma

A dust-jacket blurb is about as trustworthy as a news story in *Pravda,* but even book publishers may occasionally condescend to the truth. Thus a sentence on the jacket of Wallace Stegner's latest book is refreshing when it simply describes him as "a writer who is, without question, one of our finest living stylists."

Wallace Stegner is hardly a household word in the world of trashy best-sellers and movies made from those same books. After all, he is not fascinated with violence, perversion, cynicism, or alienation—the standard ingredients of much modern fiction. But to more sophisticated readers Stegner is a man who, for over 40 years, has given us writing which speaks to both the mind and the spirit about a wide range of human concerns. Whether in his excellent biography of Bernard DeVoto *(The Uneasy Chair),* his works on the culture of Rocky Mountains *(Mormon Country,* for example), or in one of his novels dealing with the westering experience of the American people *(The Big Rock Candy Mountain, Angle of Repose, Recapitulation,* to name a few), Stegner is both stimulating and satisfying. A dozen novels, two books of short stories, eight volumes of nonfiction, and innumerable uncollected essays all support his reputation as one of America's most distinguished men of letters. This latest book is a fitting capstone to Stegner's career as writer and teacher, for it contains 16 essays published from 1947 through 1981, none of them revised for this printing. The collection is a reader's delight as Stegner ranges over topics as different as the nature of fiction, the problems of the young writer, regional American culture, the art of photographer Ansel Adams, and three very perceptive readings of Western American classics: Owen

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Wister's *The Virginian,* Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident,* and A.B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky.*

Each piece is marked by Stegner's graceful style, his common sense, and his humaneness. As he says in his opening essay, "I fear immoderate zeal . . . because it restricts the range of human understanding and

the wise reconciliation of opposites, and creates orthodoxy with a sword in its hand." One is especially pleased to find the following note of affirmation from a modern writer: "I am terribly glad to be alive; and when I have wit enough to think about it, terribly proud to be a man and an American, with all the rights and privileges that those words connote; and most of all I am humble before the responsibilities that are also mine. For no right comes without responsibility, and being born luckier than most of the world's millions, I am also born more obligated."

The sanity of Stegner's vision is remarkable. From his first novel, *Remembering Laughter* (1937), through *Angle of Repose* (Pulitzer Prize, 1972) and *The Spectator Bird* (National Book Award, 1977), to *Recapitulation* (1979), he sees the westering experience of the American people as a passage from innocence to maturity, a process in which the old virtues often became new vices because the energy that created an empire is now dissipated in building fast-food restaurants, shopping malls, and gargantuan power plants in the pristine wilderness. If we are to survive, we must learn how to temper the pioneering spirit with responsibility: "What freedom means is freedom to choose. What civilization means is some sense of how to choose, and among what options. . . . We need to learn to listen to the land, hear what it says, understand what it can and can't do over the long haul; what, especially in the West, it should not be asked to do." Stegner has devoted most of his writing to the American West, both in its days as a frontier where Americans wrestled an empire from the plains, deserts, and mountains, and in the present when the pioneering vision has degenerated into the "Now-Wow" philosophy which characterizes (though certainly in different ways) both the Sierra Club and the Sagebrush Rebels.

For Stegner the loss of the old virtues in the American West is symptomatic of what has gone wrong in the whole nation. We are, he says, "a bundle of contradictions, conflicts, fragmentations, colliding moralities, and changes so swift and constant that we come closer than any civilization in history to being experimental. We don't have a national life, we have life-styles, all kinds of life-styles, in a constant flux that may be working up to perfection in a series of steps and may, on the other hand, be pointlessly circular." And, observing the contemporary scene and the New Morality, he comments wryly that we seem to have "come out of inertia into St. Vitus's Dance." Clearly we are, to borrow a thought from his essay on Willa Cather (not collected here), in danger of neglecting "the quintessentially American burden of remaking in terms of a new place everything that makes life graceful and civilized."

The literature of the American West is still mistakenly viewed by many as nothing more than cowboys and Indians, Zane Grey, and *Gunsmoke*. But Stegner's work—like that of Cather, Mari Sandoz and Ole Rölvaag, in whose tradition he clearly stands—clearly shows that Western American literature can be, as he describes the photography of Ansel Adams, "an affirmation of life." □

Truths Timeless and Vigorous

***The Portable Conservative Reader;* Edited by Russell Kirk;** Viking/Penguin; New York.

Recently, *The Portable Conservative Reader* appeared with the Viking/Penguin colophons and Russell Kirk's name. Certainly, the man from Mecosta needs no introduction here, as his *The Conservative Mind* is a book that exists on many shelves in a well-thumbed condition. Kirk's editorial task of bringing together authors who are representative of conservative thinking is not as simple as might be thought. As he points out in his introduction: "Conservatism not being an ideology with pretentions to universality and infallibility, there can be no Capitalist Manifesto to set against the Communist Manifesto." Conservatism is multi-faceted; there is no single text like *Das Kapital* which its partisans can go to or work from; not even the Bible fulfills such a role. Kirk provides a vivid and succinct formulation that should be kept in mind by those who grapple with the protean question: What is conservatism? Writes Kirk: "If we penetrate to the root, we discover that 'conservatism' is a way of looking at the human condition. As a conservative Polish proverb puts it, 'Old truths, old laws, old boots, and old friends are the best.' The conservative impulse is a man's desire to walk in the paths that his father followed; it is a woman's desire for the sureties of hearth and home." The final sentence quoted here is one that should give pause to those who think that conservatism is an ideology that has come to the fore in America, and who base this thought on the evidence of nothing more than political victories. Frequently, men of the 80's are not even cognizant of where their fathers trod, so busy are they making their way along the fast track in North Dallas or some other area of migration; many of today's women liken themselves to Athena rather than Demeter: the agora is more important than the hearth.

Predictably, Kirk begins with Burke; happily, he also provides a wide-ranging collection of conservative writings. Adams, Hamilton, Randolph—of course. Coleridge, Cooper, Hawthorne—at last. Kirk recognizes that the ordinary reader (and this is one who bypasses the snare of pulp thrillers and magazine racks), no matter how serious, requires a certain variation, a change from well-argued treatises to delightful poems and incisive allegories. Lewis, Eliot, Muggeridge, Nisbet—naturally. Obviously some are missing—the names here are just a sampling—but primarily as a result of the parameters imposed by the "portable" format. Nevertheless, a dip into this text is not unlike a plunge into a commonly frigid but inviting lake that shares a name with Kirk's home state, Lake Michigan: refreshing, invigorating, and character-building. That many today prefer a hot tub doesn't make the experience any less satisfying. □

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A Graveyard Alive

The Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Isaac Bashevis Singer did not win the Nobel Prize because of genius or his irrefutable beneficiality to the human race. He won it because he is the most skillful remaining chronicler of a culture that has become extinct in our own lifetime, a culture that now has as much meaning for the species as the Cretan or Mayan cultures. But there is one fundamental qualitative difference: if the cultures of Greece or pre-Columbian America left legacies of institutions worthy of study, or of decayed architectural accomplishments worth traveling miles to observe, the culture of the Central and Eastern European Jewish Diaspora will be remembered for its literariness. That does not mean philosophy and disciplined profundities of thinking, but an overpowering sense of heart-warming wisdom encompassed in religious commentaries and folkloric fables and formulated in an endemic language. There were many who contributed to it, making Yiddish—for two centuries—a language of absorbing flexibility, but in our time Mr. Singer has emerged as the prime connoisseur and collector of those wilting treasures.

Almost all of Singer is in this heavy volume of 610 pages: his flippant shallowness, his pseudoerudition, his sexual snobbery, his ego- and megalomaniacal self-promotion. Singer is a writer who never has anything bad to say about himself, never anything probingly derogatory, nothing more penetrating than a tender, self-serving irony—which disqualifies him as a serious writer and makes him an enjoyable second-rate one. The first-rate writers have always waged an endless battle with and within themselves, an element that certainly does not exist in Singer's work. But there is an inalienable magic, kindness, warmheartedness in Singer, the seductive guile of storytelling at its very best, an ability to speak with subtle mock-sagacity, a narrative intensity which overcomes all cultural gaps and ethnic boundaries. I.B. Singer has a God-given gift for blending fiction with experience; he has a genuine passion for the cultural roots and traditions conveyed to him by the generations of his own. He has proved that he knows how to perpetuate these values in the aftermath of a Holocaust in which both his people and their spiritual substances have perished; for this, he deserves our highest recognition. □

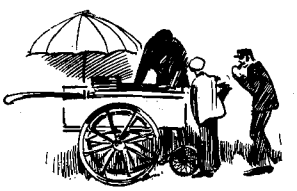
Dust to Dust

Wendell Berry: ***The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural;*** North Point Press; San Francisco.

Fortunate or not, many of us are in concert with Charles Lamb, the 19-century archurbanite. Lamb wrote to Wordsworth:

> I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of your mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses, all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden, the very women of the town, the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles—life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night, the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street, the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print shops, the old bookstalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomime, London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life.

Few shed tears while on Jefferson Avenue in Detroit, Canal Street



in New Orleans, or any like thoroughfares in major cities, but the number who do shed tears (perhaps only figuratively) over, say, the *lack* of New York's 42nd Street in their lives because of an employment-related move is very large, indeed. Those who have lived in large cities for any length of time often have an intimate—almost sensual—relationship with them. But even Lamb had a soft spot in his citified heart for nature. As Arthur Symons pointed out, Lamb wrote to Coleridge: "I feel that I shall remember your mountains to the last day I live. They haunt me perpetually." Clearly, the lure of nature is strong.

Wendell Berry is a farmer, plain and simple. Few city dwellers pay any attention to farmers. Farm price supports occasionally make the headlines, and farmers have been known to wheel their tractors into Washington, D.C., but typically farmers are considered a foreign breed and often dismissed as mere hicks. *Farmer* is the operative term here, not *agribusinessman.* The latter term refers to the type of person who runs a colossal farm the same way that Roger Smith runs General Motors: from the top, from afar. The farmer can be identified by the dirt under his fingernails during working hours, which for him span a period much longer than nine to five. Berry is vociferously opposed to agribusinessmen—whose number is increasing—those who have, in his estimation, perverted American agriculture from what was once a careful, loving husbandry of the land characterized by "modest competence, thrift, and industry" to a short-term, profit-oriented activity "based on industrial principles, exotic crops, fossil fuel, and fossil water pumped from drilled wells." Berry thinks that the former, "the principles of thrift and care," are "indispensable to the survival of human beings." The latter, "modern industrial farming . . . enormous, costly fields, dependent for their productivity on large machines, fossil fuels, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides," will "sooner or later [lead to] hunger."

Berry is not an alarmist kook, the type who drives a Volvo or trots in a Gloria Vanderbilt jogging suit to the local health-food emporium for granola and herb tea; he is a cultural conservative

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of the most basic sort (*cultura,* L, cultivation or tending), a man who carefully conserves what he has and vigorously protects it. His defense in this case is prose; few others—Curtis Stadtfeld comes to mind—could make Peruvian potato farming as interesting to a Lambite as Berry does. Perhaps it's because his language conveys his spiritual belief in and love for the land. Unfortunately, however, it is almost impossible to read Berry without hearing furtive echoes of the boorish militant conservationists, or those who have made the "back-to-nature" movement big business, in his writings, not because he is one of them, but because they employ similar words and so sully his message with their posturing. (GV) □

IN FOCUS

The Wings of Mind

Mortimer J. Adler: ***The Angels and Us;*** Macmillan; New York.

by Joseph Koterski

Actually, only two-thirds of Professor Adler's book concerns angelic beings, both faithful and fallen. The final portion considers a multiplicity of common angelistic fallacies. While angel-impersonators are rare, there are all sorts of troubles that can legitimately be ascribed to mistaking men for angels—from the innate-ideas doctrine of Descartes and the reincarnation beliefs of Eastern religions to the politics of anarchism (which expects men to love one another without laws, like the angels do) and most forms of socialism. The Marxist "new man," for example, is expected to give up certain things that corporeal men so enjoy: property and politics. Without a doubt, contemporary culture has produced more fads based on angelistic fallacies than angels could dance on the head of a pin (a question, by the way, which no medieval theologian ever seems to have asked). For example, parapsychology and telepathic communication, as well as those who hastily judge the intentions of others, all pretend to the type of communication that only the angels enjoy. There is also symbolic logic, which takes all the fun out of human ambiguities in speech by creating a non-misunderstandable language like that which the angels wordlessly employ.

Most of Adler's book, however, is devoted to angels per se. Their very existence, of course, is a matter of debate for some, so he not only considers doctrinal questions but also discusses philosophically the *possibility* of the existence of angels. Religious belief in angels would be terribly absurd, Adler argues, if we could not be assured that angels are at least possible beings, that is, "that it is possible for minds to exist without bodies." While the proof of their actual existence seems to be beyond the scope of philosophy, the proof of the *possibility* of their existence is another matter. Indeed, idealists like Descartes have an easier time with this than with explaining how the spiritual soul of man ever gets yoked to his fleshly body. But for realists like Adler, the philosophical proof of the possibility of angels rests on the validity of such distinctions as that between sense perception and imagination on the one hand and intellection or understanding on the other. Unless one grants that distinction, then nothing exists *or can exist* unless it can be sensed and imagined. But if one accepts that there are objects of thought intellectually known and separate from sensible objects, then the ability to be sensed is not the fence that keeps beings in the corral of reality. This is not to say that by being an object of thought such an object must also exist in reality, but it does affirm that noncorporeal spirits like angels are in fact possible.

It is no wonder that medieval and modern philosophers discussed angels at such great length. Their supersensory status makes them the perfect test cases of pure reason and the best possible subjects for all sorts of thought experiments. Adler follows the ages-long wrangling about how angels could ever change and how they differ from one another (matter is essential to both these subjects in our common understanding of them), how they move through space and what their communities must be like. His tour of angelic topics culminates in a chapter on "Angels as Lovers."

But religion, not philosophy, is the real cement of cultures, so Adler begins his book by considering angels as objects of religious belief. Their existence is, of course, an article of faith for religious Jews, Christians, and Moslems, and these celestial beings have given great joy to artists throughout history. The Flemish Renaissance painters of altarpieces, to take but one example besides those which Adler gives, always portrayed angels in the glorious vestments of subordinate ministers at the divine liturgy, for the Lord, whether the baby Jesus or Christ on the Cross, is the celebrant to whom they minister. Adler recounts in detail what we know about the hierarchy of the nine angelic choirs. Even the lowest have no complaints about their places, for, unlike our stadiums and music halls, there are in heaven no poles or columns to obscure the view of God's throne from one's assigned seat. As Dante puts it, "Everywhere in Heaven is paradise."

Finally, no treatment of angels would be complete without the story of the Fall. Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, stresses the centrality of Satan in salvation history, but in doing so parts company with Judaism and Islam. It is almost unimaginable to us what punishment befits those whose sin was claiming virtual equality with God. But to realize that physical pain is possible only for bodied creatures like men and that the fallen angels instead experience deprivation—the loss of the blissful angelic vision—reinforces the hard-won insight of St. Augustine: that evil is really a privation, the absence of a good that ought to exist.

All of this puts the reader in mind of the old prayer so many learned as children: "O angel of God, my guardian dear . . ." If God is "the Creator of all things, both visible and invisible," then there is more to this than meets the eye. □

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Frivolities of the Classics

Shalom Aleichem: ***Marienbad;*** G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

Shalom Aleichem was a master of Yiddish literature during its most flourishing period—the last part of the 19th century.

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He was not immune, therefore, from the temptations of the genre—which now can safely be termed ironic realism—in which all the heavyweights of fiction then indulged, from Balzac to Chekhov. So he came up with an epistolary novel, *Marienbad,* which chronicles the vicissitudes of innocently duplicitous people given to the underdeveloped snobberies and superficially motivated intrigues so characteristic of the bourgeois culture at that time. Of course, Flaubert and Hardy knew more about the pedestrian torments of well-to-do women of that time, and Aleichem was far too anecdotal to be considered a serious prober of souls, yet he held his own, and his sense of humor makes him worth reading even now. He amusingly explored the Yiddish dialectical syndrome that blends courtesy and curse with unmatched precision, and he knew how to uphold and to mock conventionality or custom in the same sentence. Aleichem was somehow in the same vein as other warmhearted realists—Dickens and Twain come to mind—but he lacked his more famous colleagues' boldness in caricature, and their sense of more universal ironies. Of course, he was unsurpassed in his tales of East European *shtetl* folklore *(Tevye the Dairyman)* in which grass-roots religiousness turns into precious chains of small-time wisdom and mixes charmingly with literariness. In *Marienbad,* he attempted to create a metaphorical *corso* out of the *Nalevki* section of the Warsaw Jewish quarter around the turn of the century—a less rewarding task than sentimentalizing folk sagacity. □

Vol. 6, No. 7 November 1982

Brainwashing in America

Levine: Comment; Fleming and Lynch on Novak *(The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism);* Tanner on Donoghue, Weeks and Fraser *(Ferocious Alphabets, Writers and Friends, A Mingled Yarn);* Bower on Perry and Hayman *(Jack London, Kafka);* Moser on Elliott *(Pawns of Yalta);* Landess on Eliade and White *(Autobiography, Poems and Sketches of E.B. White);* Steensma on Plath and Sexton *(The Collected Poems, The Journals, The Complete Poems);* Michaelsen on Sabato *(The Rise of Political Consultants);* Tunney on Godwin and Thayer *(A Mother and Two Daughters, Three Women at the Water's Edge);* Goodell on Bauer, Loehr and Powelson *(Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion, The Economics of Development and Distribution);* Settanni on Hennesey *(American Catholics);* Reed on Edwards and Adlet *(Ronald Reagan: A Political Biography, The Reagan Wit);* Commendables; In Focus; Waste of Money; Screen; Music; Polemics & Exchanges; Correspondence; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Social Register; In My Solitude; Liberal Culture.

WASTE OF MONEY

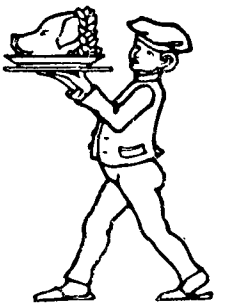
Sleaze to Please?

Harold Robbins: *Spellbinder;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

Harold Robbins, as is well known, is one of the richest writers in the world. His megabucks come from works that have the literary sense and style that can be expected of a writer who tries to break into the field via a certified course in taxidermy. Robbins really can't be blamed for what he is doing. After all, he is simply giving readers what they want, and they, in turn, are giving him what he wants: money. Fair is fair. However, how fair are things? Does Simon & Schuster, a division of Gulf & Western Corporation, publish Robbins because of his value as a writer or because of the quantity of books that he sells; does the conglomerate's profit center publish writers (or one of its other divisions, Paramount, produce films) based on merit? Little ratiocination is required for coming up with answers.

Spellbinder is a departure for Robbins inasmuch as sex does not play as large a role as it does in most of his other novels. *The Betsy,* for example, is, on its surface, about the auto industry, but most of the horsepower is expended in scenes of rutting. Has Robbins mellowed—or is he just trying to tap that market that buys the more chaste romances? There is something besides sex that ties Robbins's books together: he takes a formulaic approach to the production of them. In this respect, he is similar to Arthur Hailey. Hailey, of course, selects a subject such as banking or hotel management, then weaves his narration around an explanation of how his subject works. Robbins, too, picks a familiar subject (both hit the same one with *The Betsy* and *Wheels,* though the latter really is about the business), then goes on to show how corrupt the people involved with it are. It must be a quirk in many millions of people that makes them want to read about what a bunch of creeps their fellow humans—ones that would seem to be good people—are, as seen through Robbins's glass.

In *Spellbinder* Robbins casts his eye on what he terms "the conservative Christian majority." To add verisimilitude to his work he utilizes the names of real people—Oral Roberts, Billy Graham—and things like *The Moral Majority Report* against which to set up his props (e.g., *The Major Minority Report).* Suffice it to say that the so-called fundamentalist church Robbins creates is a monster; the preacher, for example, smokes and sniffs drugs before, during, and after cavorting between the sheets with some of his "saved." The church, of course, is simply a mechanism through which monies are generated for an old,



nasty Texas tycoon who says things like, "Now it's time for right-thinkin' Christian Americans to take their own country back into their own hands." He, naturally, is the villain of the piece; the freewheeling preacher is the sainted hero.

It might seem that Robbins is entering the arena on the side of people like Norman Lear. Perhaps Robbins is a liberal humanist who would like to see every church in America turned into a secular bus stop. There's another possibility, however: both Simon & Schuster and Gulf & Western agree with the accuracy and depth of Mr. Robbins's sociological analysis. It's probably not *pecunia* but their contributions to the "social issues" debate that motivates them. (GV) □

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Moral Revanchism

Das Boot; Written and directed by Wolfgang Petersen; Triumph Films (A division of Columbia Pictures).

by Eric Shapearo

War is hopeless and cruel—we know that. A movie that seriously intends to make this point once again must therefore put its efforts into saying something *more*. The authors of *Das Boot* try hard, but all they can come up with is a clumsy revisionism whose intensely suggested conclusion is that the Germans were both human and humane, and that they were dragged into World War II against a palpable popular will which actually oscillated between apathy and outright pacifism. That the Germans were and are human—that is, prone to feelings and sufferings like everybody else—is an axiom not in need of substantiation. Whether they were humane—as a nation, a fighting force, or in any other collective sense—that depends on the period under discussion and on how high the collective German disappointments and frustrations had mounted at the time. To claim that they were unenthusiastic about the war in 1941, when they were winning it and had conquered the largest chunk of Eurasia since Napoleon, is an outright, gross distortion of the reality that many of us still remember. The movie opens with a scene that epitomizes its historical falsity: at a boozing binge in a navy officers' club in La Rochelle (the most powerful German submarine base on the French Atlantic coast), everybody is more or less anti-nazi, nobody uses the *Sieg Heil* greeting, a drunken *Ritterkreutzträger* insults Hitler through a microphone, and the film's protagonist openly expresses his disillusionment and misgivings. In 1941? At that time, the German navy elite was inebriated with its successes; it was highly disciplined and well-mannered, animated by an atrocious dedication to the war's objectives. Anyone foolish enough to publicly doubt Hitler's genius, even the highest-decorated war hero, would not be permitted to vomit comfortably in a restroom but would instead wake up the next morning in a special SS prison. Such gross distortions of factuality abound in *Das Boot:* The U-boat gets an order routing it through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean, an unheard-of assignment at that time, on par with ordering an astronaut to reach the moon in a glider. After all its ordeals and tribulations, the ship finally berths at its base, only to be destroyed, along with its entire crew, by a deus ex machina attack by British bombers—a particularly ludicrous denouement that is both historically and technically inane—the Luftwaffe reigned supreme over the continent at that time, and—at any time—German naval bases had advance-warning systems that prevented Allied air squadrons from popping in out of the blue like a drugged motorcycle gang.

But the most crass abuses are in the artistic layer of the movie. As someone next to me said, the only change in the men on screen is the growth of their beards. The tepid anti-Hitlerism of the characters is never supported dialectically or dramatically: there's a mood of routine naturalism in the combat scenes, which proves that war is abject and senseless, but we knew that before we settled in our seats. The ratio of pro- and anti-nazi attitudes is grossly falsified—at *that* time, most of the German military was pro-nazi; here and there might have nested a cautious rebel, but in *Das Boot* it is just the reverse. And in still another exercise in phoniness, the German U-boat crew, after having torpedoed a British tanker, weep as they watch British seamen jump from the sinking ship to their merciless fate. (That's a factual blunder, too, for it's unbelievable that the destroyers in the British convoy would have done nothing—after chasing away the attackers—to evacuate the priceless crew from a vessel that was aflame but still afloat for at least six hours, according to the plot-action timing.)

After the war, the Germans made a number of revisionist movies purporting to show the *truth* about the war, which they claimed had been twisted by Hollywood's serialized propaganda imagery. One of them, *Die Brücke,* was a masterpiece, a study in sincerity and sensitivity. *Das Boot* is not in that class. □

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O Paltry New World

***Tempest;* Written by Paul Mazursky and Leon Capetanos; Directed by Paul Mazursky; Columbia Pictures.**

Designer Victor Papanek, in his *Design for the Real World,* makes an observation that should be kept in mind by not only those who design products, but also by all involved in the creation of artifacts:

> The steel beam in a house, painted a fake wood grain; the molded plastic bottle designed to look like expensive blown glass; the 1967 New England cobbler's bench reproduction ('worm holes $1 extra') dragged into a twentieth century living room to provide dubious footing for martini glass and ash tray: these are all perversions of materials, tools, and processes.

Paul Mazursky's *Tempest* is a 1611–1612 play forced into the structure of an examination of a midlife crisis circa 1982. "Show me the magic," the Prospero in this paean to social and sexual irresponsibility says while snapping his fingers more like a beatnik gone to seed than a magician, yet there is no wizardry in this film, outside of that provided by part of the setting: a sun-bleached isle surrounded by a wine-bright sea.

It's often said that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's final commentary on the nature of his art. Just as the playwright could perform feats that ordinary men could only dream about, Prospero could control what occurred on and about his enchanted isle—with the exception of the dictates of nature, as shown in the development of Miranda, who eventually required a Ferdinand. Once people entered Blackfriars or the Globe, they were no longer in the mundane world that lay beyond the walls, but in one where time and space meant nothing, as they could be collapsed or expanded with the scratch of a quill pen. While *The Tempest* is certainly one of the most magical plays in Shakespeare's canon, it's interesting to note that in it he obeys the unities of time and place, which is rare for him. It's almost as if he recognized that by limiting himself in one respect he was more able to take liberties in others: critical observers would then concentrate on the art, not simply decry the continued flouting of convention. And so he worked his art, pushed his poetry. If it is a swan song, it isn't an agonizing bleat but a soaring lyric. Shakespeare was 48 years old in 1612, well beyond middle age by the standards of the time. There was no diminution in his powers.

But what of Mazursky? He has created *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* ('69) . . . *Blume in Love* ('73) . . . *An Unmarried Woman* ('78) . . . and others in between. A thread that binds is that they are all "with-it" films. Mazursky probably used the word "groovy" as an operative term in his vocabulary while making them. Story ideas seem to have been culled from a Fifth Avenue psychologist's note pad. *Tempest* is roped in with the rest. Mazursky appears to be pushing his banality to the limit here, telling nothing about people that can't be discovered by observing the advertisements in *New York* magazine: what the characters say, how they dress, what their so-called problems are—all of this and more are predictable. To give the movie a semblance of artistic responsibility Mazursky seizes Shakespeare's frame. The result is not unlike that which can be obtained by a mass manufacturer taking a pair of handmade leather shoes and producing a simulation in Corfam. (SM)

MUSIC

Records: The English Neo-Renaissance

by Robert R. Reilly

Culture can be explained in rational terms, but what animates a country's specific cultural life is a mystery. For instance, why has Germany produced so many great symphonists and Spain so few, or Hungary so many great musicians? More to the point with regard to these records, why did English music suffer a hiatus of genius for two centuries, from Purcell's death in 1695 until Elgar's emergence at the turn of this century, and then undergo a glorious—and continuing—renaissance? Since this renaissance drew much of its inspiration from the 16th and 17th centuries, it was largely immunized from the dodecaphonic plague that swept the continent. Most of the music is tonal, lyrical, even pastoral. This earned modern English composers the reputation among avant-garde critics of being 30 years behind the times. But, as C.S. Lewis once said, "If the clock is telling the wrong time, why not turn it back?"

The first wave of this renaissance was led by Gustav Holst (1914–1976), Ralph Vaughn Williams and Frederick Delius. The Musical Heritage Society has made available at modest cost a digital recording (MHS 4514) of Holst's most famous work, *The Planets,* Op. 32, played by the Scottish National Orchestra and conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson. The musical *Star Wars* of its time, *The Planets* continues to be so popular that it has eclipsed the rest of Holst's substantial oeuvre. Although justifiably irked at the neglect of his other works, Holst should not have been surprised. They do not,

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with the exception of *The Hymn of Jesus,* approach the sonic spectacle and opulent orchestral effects of *The Planets,* whose symphonic fireworks are apparent in the excellent sound of this recording. Anyone disposed to dismiss Holst as a brilliant but shallow showman should explore his moving settings of medieval religious love poetry. His *Four Songs for Voice and Violin,* Op. 35, and *This Have I Done For My True Love,* Op. 34, for unaccompanied voices, deal in a simple and unadorned way with deep and passionate Christian experiences and truths. The antithesis of the sonic blockbuster, these gentle songs have a heartrending beauty. They can be found on an imported double disc Argo set (ZK 74-75) which contains other lovely Holst music for voices.

William Walton (1902-), who, along with Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett, represents the second wave of the renaissance, was under a great deal of pressure during the production of his first symphony. Its premiere was to have been part of a 1934 program including Elgar's third symphony, a work which was prevented by Elgar's death. Walton had only the first three movements ready at festival time and completed the fourth a year later. It was time well spent, for he produced a work worthy of the freshly minted English symphonic "tradition." Nonesuch Records (H-71394) has finally made a performance of this work available domestically. It is conducted by Vernon Handley and played by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Dramatic and propulsive in its moments of grandeur, this symphony is exciting without being frenetic, romantic but not saccharine. An even better measure of its merits is conveyed by Andre Previn in an imported RCA London Symphony Orchestra performance.

A new London digital recording (LDR 71046) pairs Sir Michael Tippett's (1905-) latest work, *Symphony No. 4* (1977), with his much earlier *Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles* (1948), both featuring Sir George Solti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The contrast between the two gives evidence to the wide ground Tippett has covered. The *Suite* is from Tippett's richly lyrical period which produced distinctively individual but easily accessible, elaborately ornamented, celebratory music. The *Fantasia Concertante,* on a theme of Corelli (1953), is a slightly later and ravishingly beautiful example. (An excellent performance is available on Argo.) The formal title of the *Suite* may give it a slightly stuffy, ceremonial sound, but there is not one officious note in this joyous, festive music. It employs some traditional tunes, including a French one, perhaps as a reminder of a previous royal claim, and is immediately appealing. In the late 50's Tippett's music became thorny, dense, astringent. His *Third Symphony* is an uneasy amalgam of Beethoven, literally quoted, blues numbers sung by a soprano, and his own highly individual style. *Symphony No. 4* does not contain such jarring stylistic juxtapositions; it has internal consistency. Also, along with the compressed power Tippett can generate, it contains strong hints of his old lyricism and ornamental tracery. The one-movement work is supposed to be, in Tippett's words, a "birth-to-death" piece encompassing in 30 minutes a complete cycle of human existence. Newcomers to Tippett should enjoy the *Suite,* but would probably prefer it paired with a more accessible work, such as *Symphony No. 1,* on a Phillips recording now on the imported PSI label.

What are you doing after age eighty? Probably planning to slow down a bit? Havergal Brian (1876-1972) didn't; he proceeded to write 21 symphonies (out of a total of 32) in a great octa- and nonagenarian outburst of creative energy. His influence cannot be counted in any wave of the English renaissance because he was usually overlooked by his contemporaries. For example, his mammoth *Gothic Symphony* written in 1919 had to wait until 1961 for its first performance. A four-hour choral work based on an epic by Shelley was simply lost. Undeterred by neglect and indifference, this largely self-taught composer and former carpenter's apprentice must be counted as one of the great English eccentrics. When an interviewer delicately asked about Brian's intimations of mortality as he sailed into his ninth decade, Brian responded: "I can't die, I just bought a new pair of trousers."

Brian began composing monumental orchestral canvases, but over the years his works became increasingly compressed, concise, volcanic: fewer words to say more. Always tonal, his work nevertheless has a wildness and originality that is all the more startling because of its traditional syntax: it is the true strangeness of the familiar. Far into the 20th century Brian was mixing new, sometimes violently contrasted sounds from an orchestral palette that most others had abandoned as exhausted. He proved it was as unexhausted as his own spirit. His *Symphony No. 4* (1933) is a choral symphony entitled "Psalm of Victory" (Psalm 67 in the Douay Bible) and it shares in the expansive nature of his earlier works. Aries Records (LP-1621) has made available a performance whose value is hard to judge due to the muted sound, presumably of broadcast origin, which leaves the words indistinguishable. But even a pale facsimile is interesting. Engish critic Harold Trescott has opined: "That it is one of the greatest choral works in the whole English choral tradition, I have no doubt. It has an astounding variety of expression and it is as masterly in the delicacy of its writing as in the massive treatment of the full resources." The "full resources" of this symphony are such that one's house would require reinforcement if a digital record of it were ever issued. The symphony begins with what sounds like pomp-and-circumstance music for a royal celebration but quickly goes its own eruptive way. The reader also may wish to explore Brian's music through imported Lyrita and EMI discs and experience this enigma wrapped in the cultural mysteries of England's 20th-century musical renaissance. □

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Letter from Chicago: Feeling About Machines

by Stephen Macaulay

> Let any one who is acquainted with what multitudes of people get their daily bread in this city by their labour, whether artificers or mere workmen —I say, let any man consider what must be the miserable condition of this town if, on a sudden, they should all be turned out of employment, that labour should cease, and wages for work be no more.
>
> —Daniel Defoe
> *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1721)

Chicago is known by various monikers, such as the Windy City, the Second City, and others not fit to print. One of the more famous titles is the City that Works. Every two years since 1972—it was every five years before that—the National Machine Tool Builders' Association holds an exhibition in Chicago. The International Machine Tool Show (IMTS) is inevitably a smashing success, the largest industrial trade exhibition in this part of the world (Hanover, for example, dwarfs it), which draws thousands of exhibitors, attendees, and observers from around the world. In 1982, the City that Works *sounds* like a misnomer and the prospect of a machine-tool show *seems* superfluous, as most of the industrialized cities in the nation are full of the unemployed, and orders in the domestic machine-tool industry were down in September 51% from 1981, which wasn't a particularly good year. Economic news—typically bad, not good—has become a wasting staple on page one of newspapers: recession, inflation, cost of living, and the like are words that peal like death knells. Things are presented as being bleak, drear, and dismal; it brings to mind Defoe's examination of the 1665 Great Plague that ravaged London. Hyperbole? Perhaps, but certainly not in the light of headline writers and economic prognosticators.

IMTS 82 was held from September 8 to 17 in McCormick Place East, McCormick Place West, and the O'Hare Exposition Center. Suffice it to say that a pre-downsizing automobile show could be comfortably held in any one of the halls, and the first-named could simultaneously house a convention of pre-OPEC gas station owners. During IMTS the mammoth halls were filled with machines that cut or shape metal and a wide variety of equipment and services ancillary to them. When a hall is nearly empty but the machines cycling, the noise of giant presses, milling machines, lathes, punches, and the rest is such that it is almost a physical presence. When the machine operators are joined by salesmen, show-goers, journalists, guards, and maintenance people, the sense one experiences is not unlike what it must be to move through a room full of Jell-O: resisting yet yielding. The machines—even for one who doesn't understand what they are doing—are fascinating; they would have brought Marinetti and his band of Futurists to ecstasy. The crowd was composed of eager people: some anxious to take in the new technology; others keen on having a legitimate excuse to be out of the factories and in the city, an especial treat for those out of town and on an expense account—the bars and expensive restaurants were packed every night, and even rooms costing upwards of $114 per night were booked.

This was my third consecutive visit to IMTS. While I had expected it to be a smaller, more low-key event than those of '78 and '80, I was surprised to find myself wrong. Chicago *was* working—at least providing services, especially the death-defying hacks (one asked me if I'd ever been to New York City and so be able to verify the rumor that he had heard, that the cabbies there are "more rugged")—and a machine-tool exhibition did serve a valuable service in showing industrialists what they *require* to, once again, pull themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps. Attendance figures provided by the NMTBA showed that crowds, though not always as numerous as in preceding years, were still crowds. The equipment was there in force. This year it was more obvious than ever, not because more of it had robot arms and other such automated appendages, but because so much of it was painted with colors taken from the palettes of pop artists—bright blues, oranges, and even purple.

But something *felt* wrong to me; something was missing; statistics couldn't prove otherwise. In time I found the difference. As anyone who has attended an auto show knows, car makers inevitably have very slinky women draped on or about their displays. Men, I suppose, are meant to be arrested first by the alluring fleshy form, then by the metallic lines. It is—or was—no different for builders of industrial equipment. Most of the attendees at IMTS were men, and a large number of those visiting from out of the area had left their wives and girl friends behind. A sleek Corvette has more sex appeal than a horizontal boring mill—no matter what color it's painted. At the earlier shows I observed that some display owners were cognizant of that perception, and so they staffed their displays with what were, presumably, ex-auto show models; others went further and featured what had to be waitresses from kinky (though decidedly heterosexual) cocktail bars. I don't know that the girls sold any machines, but they unquestionably drew swarms to even the most unexciting sponsors. There was something crudely Freudian about a nicely shaped personhood in a slit skirt pushing industrial lubricants. This year, however, the girls were gone, replaced by ranks of more businesslike females. A result of ERA, perhaps? I doubt it. Rather,

Mr. Macaulay is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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I think, it shows a recognition that things are now serious; "that labour should cease" is not a wholly unthinkable prospect.

> We had no such thing as printed newspapers in those days to spread rumours and reports of things, and to improve them by the invention of men. . . . Hence it was that the rumour died off again, and people began to forget it, as a thing we were very little concerned in, and that we hoped was not true . . . till two men . . . died of the plague.
>
> —Defoe

Few in number are new machine tools without a CRT—cathode-ray tube—display: something that resembles a TV screen. To use equipped machines, data are entered through an alphanumeric keyboard. The whole setup is rather like a sophisticated cash register in McDonald's, and, indeed, it may be an example of what is termed "technology transfer" by proponents of space exploration. The reason behind the use of the CRT display is that the machines utilize some form of computer control. Such control for machine tools was developed at M.I.T. during the late 40's and early 50's; by 1955 numerical control was a commercial product. The 70's saw computer numerical control as the advanced but available control scheme. An examination of the trade press from 1952 to the present shows that editors thought and think the controls marvelous and essential developments; few issues of *American Machine* magazine—the *New York Times* of metalworking—have appeared without one type of control obvious or at least lurking in its pages in the past 30 years. However, buyers and users of machine tools have traditionally been more conservative than the article writers; they tended to like things that they could understand—gears rather than sophisticated Inductosyn devices. Names from textbooks began to appear in print: Descartes's coordinate system, the PASCAL computer language. Experts and academicians touted the controls as necessary for any contemporary shop or factory, for without them, the companies couldn't be competitive with shops that were so equipped. Few listened. During the 60's industrial robots appeared. Once again, there was hail in print, neglect in practice. In the past few years people began paying attention to the ubiquitous Japanese autos on the American roads. Soon, large numbers of Japanese machines, complete with CRT's and robot loading arms, emerged in the market with low prices and quick deliveries. They proved to be as popular as the Toyotas and Hondas. Then people began reading about Japanese productivity; they knew firsthand about its quality. The article writers weren't making the story up. It became known that the Japanese were using advanced equipment—CNC machine tools, robots, etc. —to build cars, cameras, digital watches, and the rest. Statistics showed that American manufacturers, in large part, were using obsolete machines. It's not that state-of-the-art equipment wasn't available—American ingenuity was responsible for numerical control and robots—it just wasn't used. Some pointed to the fact that the Japanese government supports its manufacturers and that the U.S. government, with its OSHA and EPA, is at odds with it. But at bottom, I think, it's American stubbornness and skepticism that prevented use of up-to-date equipment and practices. Foreign competition didn't lessen in time, it increased. So now, it seems, everyone wants a video-display-equipped machine in this Age of Atari. Paying for it is another thing.

However, not all of the TV-type screens in the exhibition halls were on machine tools. There were 30 freestanding screens in various groupings, which comprised the access ports to the "Electronic Exhibitor's Directory Service." It was childishly simple: all one had to do to find the name of, say, milling-machine exhibits or the location of the restrooms was to point at a message displayed on the screen and lightly touch the glass surface. Within seconds, the required information could be obtained via glowing green images. It was quite like the text shown on the screen of a word processor. A friend who does pub-

Justice in America

Under a lovingly wistful (as well as thoroughly misleading, unfortunately) title—"The Last Liberals: Legal Aid Under Seige"—*New York* magazine, the journal of Gucci ideas, bewails the hard times that have befallen the Legal Aid Society. That society is the single largest ally of crime in America: its highly skilled, fanatically liberal lawyers "represented 159,614 criminal defendants," last year—for free, no charge, just in the name of compassion for the "needy" who have been turned into beasts by America's oppressiveness. Of course, once they are freed from the jaws of the police and the bestial judiciary, the LAS's young clients eagerly return to the streets to rape, mug, murder, etc., assured that if they are apprehended, another young, ferociously liberal lawyer will be at their service, gratis. Here is how one James Vinci, "the head of the society's Manhattan criminal office," describes his mission:

> I'm the good guy and the D.A. is the bad guy. As good guys, we test the system.

That is the gist of Legal Aid Society's philosophy and ethics—testing the system; no one is interested in simple justice any longer. We live in liberal America, where both the phrase and the notion of the wages of sin have been obliterated in the name of liberal idealism. Idealism? Would this suggest that Mr. Vinci and his moral aberrationists work for the love of a sacred vocation? How naive. In 1981 the Legal Aid Society pumped out of the U.S. government (conservative government, hee, hee . . .) $29.6 million. Money that belongs to you, to me, and to the taxpaying victims of the rapists, muggers, and murderers who shake hands with the triumphant lawyers. □

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lic-relations work for several machine-tool companies told me recently that I *must* get a word processor. But as Walter Abish wrote, "Paper made books possible. It also helped prevent illiteracy. I have an interest in books and paper. An overwhelming interest." But perhaps my insistence on pulling a carbide ball supplied with ink across a blank sheet is not unlike that of the before-mentioned machinists who wanted to position machine spindles by hand. Still, I felt heartened when I noted that the electronic directories weren't being used as often as the 236-page directory to IMTS. Marshall McLuhan would have felt otherwise. But, after all, IMTS 82 was a hardware show: you can't see software. □

JOURNALISM

Prevaricators

With its usual high-minded mendacity, *Time,* that mammoth factory of expertly processed slants, pontificates about the dismal state of college education in America: the all-but-illiterate students, the regression of youthful minds, rampant ignorance, etc. The author of the piece asserts, with the finesse of a Ph.D. of prevarication:

> College officials tend to blame student shortcomings on the high schools, which undeniably need reform and renewal, but the high schools can blame the elementary schools, the elementary schools the family at home, and everybody blames TV.

Is anyone missing from this list? Where are the print media? And for that matter—*Time* magazine itself? We read further that the decay of academic intelligence began in America in the 1960's:

> The traditional curriculum, such as it was, virtually disintegrated during the campus upheavals of the 1960s, when millions of students demanded and won the right to get academic credit for studying whatever they pleased. There were courses in soap opera and witchcraft.

Once more, we ask: Where was *Time's* distress and hand-wringing when all those sordid things were happening during the 60's? Can *Time's* editors find in their pages one line protesting the atrocities against reason that were committed during the 60's? And if they cannot, why do they so brazenly refuse to shoulder *any* responsibility for what has become of American education? And why do they pretend *now* to be the only just ones in Sodom, knowing well how they behaved *then?*

But wait a minute. Why should we expect contrition, when a few paragraphs further, we can read:

> The excesses of the 1960s should not be used to besmirch reforms that were valuable. They too derived from a distinguished intellectual tradition. Its founding father was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. . . . There is considerable power to the idea that a student should be primarily educated not to hold a job or to memorize literary monuments or even to think like Aristotle, but simply to develop the potentialities of his own self—and that everyone's self is different.

So here we go again. By now, every objective student of moral and social philosophy is well aware that Rousseau was the archvillain. His ideas, considered liberating and humane in his time, engendered 19th-century nihilism and led straight to the Haight-Ashbury ethos and rationale. In the lunacy of the 1960's, the basic principle that education *is* guidance was blasted by minds akin to that of *Time's* mechanistic compilers of data and bits of erudition. The result was a drugged, fornicating, "collegian," rendered stuporous by the relentless pounding of acid rock, who had "developed the potentialities of his own self." Apparently, *Time* still considers a humanoid the best prototype of an educated American. The idea that education, besides knowledge, must *also* convey a sense of sociomoral obligations and responsibilities has yet to sink in at *Time's* editorial offices. □

Can You Trust an American Socialist?

One Sidney Lens, an editor of *The Progressive* (a socialist journal in spite of its misleading name), writes in *The Nation* (another journalistic misnomer) about "The Most Dangerous Cliché," which is how he sees the phrase "You can't trust the Russians," at this point an American colloquialism. According to Mr. Lens, those words represent a particularly pernicious abomination foisted upon our political folklore by some sort of Republican semantic conspiracy; it is his opinion that although we may on occasion distrust the Russians and their government, we should actually distrust our own government and ourselves much more intensely. And since he aspires to intellectual respectability, Mr. Lens provides exemplifications of our mutual abuse of trust.

On the Russian side, he lists the rape of the Yalta agreement, though he does not call it that precisely (to him, the Soviets just "did not keep their word"), and he tactfully labels the Russian slaughters in Hungary and Afghanistan as "violations" of the U.N. Charter and the right to self-determination. But he immediately reminds us that Stalin refused to help the Greek communists in 1947 because of the "spheres of in-

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IS AMERICAN CULTURE ON A SINKING SHIP?

Christianity and Civilization: The new, thought-provoking and informative journal of Christian thought; thoroughly Biblical, comprehensively catholic, and distinctively Reformed.

VOLUME ONE: The Failure of the American Baptist Culture*

"The Failure of American Baptist Culture" might seem a puzzling topic for a symposium of essays, but the contention of the editors. . .is that American culture or civilization has been, in the main, a Baptist modification of old catholic and Reformed culture. The New Christian Right, in its attempts to stem the tide of degeneracy in American life, is a Baptistic movement, and. . . finds itself in a condition of crisis, confusion, and indeed impotence. The thesis the editors are setting forth. . .is that American Christianity must return to a full-orbed Biblical and Augustinian theology, and set aside Baptistic individualism, if it is to have anything to say to modern problems — indeed, if it is to survive.

Most Christians who have wrestled with the question of infant baptism (or paedobaptism), over against professor's baptism (the Baptist position), have noticed that each side seemingly has strong Biblical arguments for its case. For several centuries, theologians and preachers have hurled Bible texts and theological arguments back and forth without convincing either side. . .

What, then, is the true character of the debate between Baptists and paedobaptists, between independents and catholics? That character is presuppositional, rather than exegetical. The purpose of the essays in this symposium is to expose these presuppositions, so that a more intelligent discussion of the problems can ensue.

*300 pp., kivar bound, 6"x 9"

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fluence" deal. He scrupulously omits noting that Uncle Joe gave a green light to the Greek revolution and backed out only after the announcement of the Truman Doctrine: Stalin could not afford a confrontation with the U.S. So it is at this point that Mr. Lens begins to lie. He adds that "Moscow has carefully abided by the SALT II agreement," thus "there are times when Moscow's word is as good as gold," but this is impossible to verify since Moscow has rejected any fair verification process, the reason why SALT II is dead. Nowhere does he mention that ours is an open society, where Russian and communist spies romp freely through the countryside, which is studded with high technology and corporate headquarters full of classified blueprints. Nor does he admit that theirs is a society in the iron vise of the secret police, where a conversation with a foreigner about light bulbs may earn one a 10-year residence somewhere around the North Pole. Moreover, our society gives its Sidney Lenses the right to report on everything, even if it serves the Kremlin in war and peace: any newly invented weaponry can be revealed in the pages of magazines just to gratify the editors' ideological itches.

The festival of Mr. Lens's lies is really initiated, however, with his listing of *our* abuses of Soviet trust. Here goes: we have overthrown Mossadegh in Iran, Arbenz in Guatemala, and Allende in Chile. Of course, Mr. Lens is lying: we were just on the side of the political movements that rose up to shake off the radical politicians of dictatorial bent who allied themselves with international communism, the Russian totalitarian state, and its Cuban proxies. We supported those movements —some of which were popular and majoritarian in nature—with money, but we did not send tanks to bloodily suppress any "liberationist" uprising offensive to our principles, as the Soviets did in Czechoslovakia, or the Cubans in Eritrea. Yet the mendacity of Mr. Lens knows no bounds: he accuses us of trampling the Russians' innocent kindness and confidence in Korea and Vietnam, where all treaties, promises, and agreements were torn to shreds by Soviet-trained, -inspired, and -armed hordes. It is now history, confirmed by the Chinese communists, that it was trustful, trustworthy, "scrupulously" gentlemanly Stalin who *personally* ordered the hostilities in Korea and approved the Vietnamese Politbureau's original decisions of war. His word was good as gold. Mr. Lens reaches the peak of hilarity in his prevarications when he writes: "We have meddled in the internal affairs of Italy by subsidizing its Christian Democratic Party with millions of dollars." All those anti-Marxist scholars who have defected from Russia, Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia over the last quarter-century could inform Mr. Lens that since the establishment of the Cominform immediately after World War II, at least one percent of the GNP of *all* satellite countries has gone into the coffers of the French and Italian Communist Parties. And that's a lot more money than we could lavish upon the Christian Democrats.

But Mr. Lens does not take instruction from such scholars. He has better sources of information—his own political zealotry, for instance. He is politically committed and he serves a certain cause. The fundamental tenet of his ideology is to make America—its system of government, its freely elected leaders, and the American masses that support the American democracy—look as bad as the Russians, the Soviets, the KGB henchmen. According to his cliché, we are just as mean and corrupt as they are; there's no difference whatsoever. So they are fully entitled to distrust us.

In a sense, he's right. We do *not* wish them well. And if he needs an explanation for that, he should consult Professor Sakharov and Mr. Shcharansky instead of his pals at *Pravda* and in the Politbureau. □

Cock-Journalism

A certain Mr. Cockburn, an import from England's dime stores of radical-leftist blabbery, is performing of late in the pages of the procommunist magazines of this country (he is also guest marionette in the *Wall Street Journal*). He introduces into the political press's merchandise the unmistakable tone of a self-righteous fishwife reminiscent of the genuine Bolshevik publicistics of the time of Zinoviev and Radek. In a recent *Mother Jones*, Mr. Cockburn informs his readers about the real character of the KGB border troops with an apt, if heinously crooked, comparison:

> Another 200,000 are border guards under the command of the KGB, troops that are analogous to the U.S. Coast Guard and Border Patrol.

What precision of simile. The KGB *pogranitchniki* operate within a universe of barbed wire, land mines, watchtowers, bloodthirsty dogs and legal prerogatives to kill on sight anyone who ventures into the border vicinity. According to modest estimates by all experts on the Soviet Union, they have been responsible for nearly a million murders since the Soviet secret police (then called Cheka) assumed that function. And everybody knows how the U.S. Border Patrol *also* assassinates on the spot anyone who tries to stroll into Mexico, and how the Coast Guard torpedoes people who try to swim across a lake into Canada. □

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THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

Courage and Greatness

There's little doubt that the Beirut massacre has deeply affected our sensitivities and snowballed into a huge quandary of politics and conscience. Complex, sinister, ageless relationships between human nature and evil, hatred, vengeance, violence are all involved, and we will not rush to shrill and narrow-minded interpretations. A momentous transvaluation of values is already taking place and its scope will continue to expand. We have never belonged to Mr. Begin's baiters. So far as we can see, he is a conservative nationalist with a larger perspective on his nation's destiny than just the quotidian realpolitikal business, and, in our perception, such an attitude does not connote sin. He came to power by impeccably democratic means, and he need relinquish it only when the Israeli electorate asks him to. The fury with which the international left—from *Pravda* to *The Nation*—attacks him proves to us that he is a potent and beneficial factor in our contemporary reality.

Yet we do think that, with this turn of history, he should resign. Whatever he thinks about his own indispensability to his nation, whatever his notion of the guilt or innocence of his generals and allies, he should shoulder the blame himself—and go. Great men distinguish themselves, first and foremost, by their courage and willingness to sacrifice: to say "no" to the sense of one's own mission and uniqueness is the supreme heroism for a statesman. Were Mr. Begin to effect such a gesture, unprodded by pressure and political necessity, but instead through a distinct imperative of self-offering, his name would be cleansed, and his people's idea of selfhood would be purified.

There is another, infinitely more commanding, reason for Mr. Begin to step down. Israel, since its inception, has been nourished by its sense of mission: the creation of a society ruled by spiritual values, profoundly grounded in moral norms and the sanctity of freedom. The image of this mission has been tarnished by the Beirut massacre. Neither speculative justification of the latter's character nor the demagogic overexaggeration of its abjectness—as exploited by the international left—will alter the essence of Israel's mission. The corrosiveness of the stain is within its idea, not in its projection. Therefore only a momentous, deeply moving sacrificial deed can help. And the only person who can do that is Israel's prime minister.

Reality consists both of facts that we know and those we don't know; anyone who claims to know *all* the facts—and how to interpret them infallibly to boot—is a fool. Mr. Begin certainly is a statesman who can create facts and change reality. At a price of national self-sacrifice, he has brought peace to Israel's southern frontier. His northern-frontier policy, considered in global terms, has resulted in one notable act: in Lebanon, where before the "peacekeeping force" was that of an admitted Soviet proxy, the peace is now kept by French legionnaires, Italian carabinieri, and the U.S. Marines. All the hypocrisy of White House moralists notwithstanding, every Pentagon planner, and even the glibbest of the Foggy Bottom diplomats, knows that such a reconstruction holds considerable advantage for us. Only history will reveal whether Mr. Begin's acts and policies were detrimental or farsighted, providential or self-destructive. His resignation, offered *without* any admission of guilt, and in full awareness that it may imperil his lifelong efforts, may strike an instant victory for integrity and courage. This, in turn, may serve his nation's mission and image. It might persuade the world that the moral responsibility of an Israeli leader transcends earthly considerations of power. Just like the Book says it should.

Economygate

> . . . the television networks and national newspapers are sincerely convinced that a liberal bias is proof of journalistic integrity.

Thus wrote Mr. Irving Kristol recently, and the media coverage of the economic matters, so prominent in our minds these days, seems to confirm the most sinister aspect of this observation.

Nowhere in the pages of our daily newspapers of such inflated repute, nor in the mass magazines of deviously ambivalent influence, nor in the stream of modulated prevarication from anchormen and TV economic gurus can we find any serious indication:

> —that the entire planet is writhing in the convulsions of one of the most painful worldwide economic recessions this century has seen; that the United States is also a part of the process and cannot escape even to pay its own share;
>
> —that our society, as perhaps the most technologically advanced one, is currently undergoing a sort of third industrial revolution in which technological progress is effecting painful structural and social changes; that entire productive and industrial systems are obviously doomed by these changes; that we cannot avoid paying a price for this development.

All those factors are insignificant to the liberal media lords and their deep-voiced video hit men motivated by mindless dogmatism. Not until they bring down an elected executive, whom they despise for reasons of irrational doctrinairism, will they cease disseminating their "information" and their "news" that consists of quarter-truths which add up to one big pernicious lie. □

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IN MY OPINION

Leopold Tyrmand

Nations, states, and political systems that, over centuries, have mastered the art of suppressing unrest, dissent, opposition, know well that what should be feared most are symbols—chiefly those symbols which accurately express hunger for freedom, independence, society's right to its own voice. Bombs, mobs in the streets, barricades do not frighten the oppressors. Symbolizations do.

In Poland, the Soviet henchmen in Polish uniforms are not scared of the people's anger. What gave them nightmares recently was a 40-foot cross composed of freshly cut flowers (on a daily basis) in Warsaw's Victory Square; it was constructed and maintained by plain housewives and elderly retirees who consider themselves in conflict with communism as an idea and with the crude security agents who impose that idea upon Poland. A floral cross is not much of a weapon against steel-helmeted riot police; it can easily be interpreted as a sign of resignation, passivity, escape on the wings of transcendental justice—a piddling concern to a self-assured Marxist. Yet there must be some brimming, raw, unbridled power in the potted geraniums that have been assembled into a religious sign, and the communists know it. Old women, kneeling and patiently rearranging daisies, may menace armored cars more than striking workers hurling stones do. St. Paul knew something about that, and so did Nero.

Is there a lesson in it for our thriving democracy, our land of freedom where beliefs, dissatisfaction, and eccentric petulance can all be expressed with equal force? There certainly is, particularly for our statesmen and leaders. Once in power, they care little about symbolizations, but a lot about images, especially their own. They often become the victims of their inability to distinguish between the words *symbol* and *image,* and they understand the difference between the two notions even less. President Reagan is a good example. He has an image of a nice man, a decent human being. Yet he has become a symbol of insensitivity. The problem is not simply that he makes cutbacks in programs for the needy, and the liberal press, corrupt as it is, makes a big deal out of something that can be easily put into proper perspective with a modicum of journalistic goodwill. By now, most Americans know that those designated by the media as needy are not always in need of what they're claiming (and getting, mostly at the expense of those who have legitimate needs of their own and are getting nothing). Mr. Reagan's trouble thus does not come from political polemics but from his hobnobbing with rather improper people, mostly in his free time. He seems unable to comprehend that hosting a White House dinner for a movie director who projects overt procommunist sympathies shapes images—both the Presidential one and that of the unsavory cinematic fellow traveler. Whereas had Mr. Reagan invited a conservative philosopher of high intellectual standing, a professor of literature famous for his lucidity and wit, an educator universally respected for his sagacious defense of traditional values—such events would have turned into graceful symbols.

It is nearly impossible to speculate about the political benefits of that kind of Presidential style. But these facts could have transmuted into symbolizations that would have given Mr. Reagan's Presidency a whole new dimension. And, in the long run, they might have determined its place in history, which, to my mind, is the highest political profit imaginable. Above all, such symbolizations would have elevated to proper visibility the conservative analysis of what's wrong with us; it would have provided a critique of our reality that is struggling for acceptance at large. Mr. Reagan apparently still considers himself a man of conservative ideas, but the people he thrusts into public attention quite often symbolize the worst abuse of those ideas. He seems not to notice that he is surrounded by simpleminded manufacturers of images who are *losing* the war of images to all those who apparently dislike their boss. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Le Nouveau Style

For as long as we can remember, Ms. Pauline Kael of *The New Yorker* has been a so-called doyenne of American movie criticism. Thus, according to our perspective (perhaps warped by the generational coefficient), she must be about 100 years old. For a centenarian, she certainly tries hard to conform to the new journalism. Here is how she expresses her feelings (with updated spunk) about the movie *The Road Warrior* in the organ of suburban nobility:

> The Australian director George Miller grabs you by the throat—or lower . . .

She does not explain how low. Which proves how easily movie critics can slip into caricatures. A hoary lady in sneakers, jumping around talking jive, can't even be considered eccentric any more. □

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